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ALICE WAS IN WALDEN'S ARMS; HER LOVELY HEAD RESTING UPON HIS SHOULDER.

## HIS PUPIL'S SISTER.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

"Put away those horrid books, Walden, and come for a spin on the river. The evening is delightful, and the exercise will clear your brain. Don't you remember that wise old ancient and the bent bow! Upon my word you are working yourself to death in this musty old room. One would think you intended to become a walking encyclopædia! And what is the good of it all?"

Walden Digby glanced at the speaker with a good-humoured smile on his open face.

"Very good philosophy for you, Frank," he answered; "your position is assured, I have mine to make. I must work hard now, unless I am to be a burden on dear old dad all my life. But I do feel a bit seedy at present, so if you like we will have an hour's pull on the river."

"And look in at Conolly's afterwards! I know he sent you an invitation."

"Yes; it is very good of him, but I cannot spare the time. All the night wasted, and a headache in the morning; I cannot afford it."

"Well, we will not stop to discuss that; put on your flannels while I run up to my room," and leaving Walden to himself Frank Lethbridge lightly mounted the college stairs.

Closing his books, Walden proceeded to change his dress, and presently the two friends set off for the river.

Though essentially a "reading" man, Walden Digby was extremely popular with almost every section of his college, and many were the friendly greetings bestowed upon him as he and Frank wended their way to the boat-house.

"Clever fellow, Digby!" exclaimed one of a little group sauntering idly on the towing-path. "Queer, though, how Lethbridge takes him up. One would fancy these two had but little in common."

"Oh, Digby is fond enough of athletics," returned another, "but he hasn't the time; he is reading for honours."

"And he will get them; there is not a man in the place equal to him. Oxford will be proud of

Walden Digby before he has finished," a sentiment cordially echoed by the rest.

As Frank had predicted, the fresh air and healthy exercise cleared Walden's brain, and as they stepped ashore an hour or two later, the latter said laughingly,—

"I am much obliged for your prescription, Frank; the medicine has done me good. I feel equal to a night's work now."

"Better come to Conolly's for an hour!"

"And undo all I have just done; no thank you."

At the door of Walden's room Frank said,—

"By the way, I must come in for my pipe, I left it on the mantel piece," and the two entered together.

Walden was in the act of making some jesting remark, when he caught sight of a buff coloured envelope placed in a conspicuous position on the table.

Picking it up he opened it hastily, and with a cry of pain turned towards his companion.

"Look up my Bradshaw," he said, hoarsely, "and see if I can reach Eastville before the morning. Write it down on a slip of paper while I dress."

Frank asked no questions, but mechanically did as he was bidden, though the change in his friend's face frightened him.

All the sun, and the joy, and the gladness had been blotted out completely, the face was like that of one cut from a marble block.

What had happened? His own heart grew faint with fear as he put the question to himself. He had no wish to pry into his friend's affairs, but one thing he must know.

He wrote down the times of the trains, and bidding Walden hurry as there was but little margin, he rushed out for a conveyance.

Meanwhile Walden had rapidly changed his attire, and packed a small hand-bag. Pressing Frank's hand gratefully he followed him into the street and the two men entered a cab.

"Great Western Station, driver," cried Frank, "and double fare if you catch the 8.20."

"Right sir, never fear, we shall do it easily enough," and not another word was spoken until they stood on the platform waiting for the approaching train.

Then Frank could restrain his anxiety no longer,—

"Pardon me, old friend," he whispered gently, "but—is it Isabel?"

The young man betrayed no surprise at the question; he was too greatly absorbed in his own misery to notice the significance of his companion's manner.

"No," he answered, wearily, "my father is dying; even now I may be too late."

Bidding Frank farewell with a wan smile, he leaned back in the corner of an empty carriage and closed his eyes. His father was dying—perhaps dead. That was the thought which ran continually through his brain, that was the sorrow which weighed like lead upon his heart.

He had no thought of the effect his father's death might have upon his own position; his bitter grief swallowed up all selfish considerations. He realised only that the parent whom he loved so fondly was being taken from him, and he groaned in anguish.

"Come at once; your father is dying!" How the words, in letters of fire, danced before his eyes. They seemed endowed with life, and able to multiply themselves infinitely.

Would the journey never end? Mile after mile the train thundered along, dashing with terrific speed through the quiet country stations, and yet all too slow for that anxious traveller.

At length it stopped at his destination, and in a short time he was being driven rapidly towards his home.

His old nurse, Martha, met him at the door and drew him gently into the hall.

"Thank Heaven, bairn," she whispered, softly, "you are just in time; the master, poor dear, is sensible, and has been asking for you."

"Are they upstairs?"

"Yes; your mother and sister are with him waiting for the end."

"Then there is no hope left?"

"No. The knowledge that you are coming has kept him alive thus far; he is living to see his boy once again."

The young man crept noiselessly to his father's room, and entered with reverence into the chamber of death.

Mrs. Digby and her daughter sat one on each side of the bed, but they rose at Walden's entrance, and came slowly towards him.

Kissing them tenderly he whispered a few words of comfort, and approached the bed.

The sick man lay passive and motionless, with half-closed eyes, but he recognised Walden's step and glanced up with a glad smile.

"I knew you would come, my boy," he said, "now I am content!"

Walden leaned over and tenderly kissed the pallid brow; he dared not trust himself to speak.

Presently his father pressed his hand and, pointing to Isabel and her mother, said, feebly,—

"I leave them in your care; you will not allow them to suffer."

Walden shook his head.

"Have no fear," he answered, gravely, "I will guard them with my life."

Then there was silence, broken only by the

sobbing of the women, who sat helplessly watching the ebbing away of their dear one's life.

Presently he beckoned to them to come nearer, and kissed them one by one.

"Good-bye," he whispered, faintly, "it is nearly over, the light fades; I am cold with the chill of death. Farewell, my beloved ones. Walden, my boy, remember—your mother and your sister."

Probyn Digby ceased speaking; his head fell back on the pillow. Hushed for ever was the gentle voice; the kindly smile would never again illumine those pleasant features; the frank blue eyes had lost their fascination, and even as they gazed at him in dumb sorrow so he passed peacefully into the great mystery of death.

They buried him simply without show or ostentation, just as he himself would have wished, and when the notice of his death appeared in the papers there were very few who realised that one of England's truest artists had gone to his rest.

The night after the funeral Walden sat with his mother and sister discussing their plans for the future.

The young man had gone rapidly through his father's papers, and as the completion of his task he realised that without a great sacrifice on his part the dear ones who remained to him would have to face poverty in addition to their present sorrow.

And the sacrifice was indeed great. He had almost within his grasp every honour and distinction that his university could bestow upon him.

He was singularly deficient in vain-glory and self-esteem, yet he could not fail to know that amongst his fellows he was *facile princeps*.

A few days before he had been looking forward to a long and honourable career at his college. Many a fairy dream had he woven in the solitude of his rooms, and now alas! he realised that after all they had been but dreams indeed.

Still, even to himself he made no murmur, uttered no complaint. It was his duty—a duty he owed alike to his dead and living parent.

"Mother," he said, quietly, "I have made a rough estimate of our resources. Unfortunately the prospect is not a brilliant one; still there is no need that either you or Isabel should suffer greatly. A little economy, combined with the help I can give, will make your position secure."

Mrs. Digby was by no means an amiable woman, and the idea of poverty did not improve her temper.

"Don't be so absurd, Walden," she exclaimed, petulantly; "how can you help, when your college expenses will swallow up the greater part of our resources?"

Just for one brief moment a shadow of annoyance crossed the young man's brow, but he cleared it away instantly and resumed,

"I fear they would absorb the whole, not a portion of your income; but as it happens I have no intention of returning to the university. As a matter of fact I have removed my name from the books."

His mother made no comment. Though unable fully to grasp the extent of his sacrifice, she still had a vague idea that he was doing something extremely unpleasant, and concluded that silence was her best policy.

Isabel, however, who loved her brother with a pure unselfishness, gave utterance to a cry of pain. "Walden," she protested, indignantly, "you shall not do this thing; you are ruining your life in order to promote our comfort. It is not only foolish but wicked. You have no right thus to throw away your splendid talents and abilities; besides, there is no necessity for it. Mamma's expenses are not great, and I need not be a burden. I can earn my living as a governess."

"Softly, dear," he said with a smile, stroking the girl's silky tresses; "after all, it is only a matter of shifting the centre of my ambitions—the university is not the only road to success in life."

In vain she begged and entreated him to alter his decision; rightly or wrongly his mind was made up: in view of the promise made to his dying father he felt that he could not conscien-

tiously continue to be a drain upon the resources of his family.

Convinced at last of the hopelessness of her task, Isabel gave up the attempt to move him, and proceeded instead to question him with regard to his future action.

"Well," he said, "at present, of course, I have no very definite idea, though I rather think of advertising for a tutorship—as a beginning, you know."

Isabel made a little grimace.

"Poor Walden," she murmured, sadly, "it is very hard upon you."

Presently Walden wished them both good-night and retired to his room with a sorrowful heart. He had satisfied his own conscience, and did not regret it, but the exhibition of his mother's selfishness rankled in his heart.

## CHAPTER II.

A MONTH had elapsed since Probyn Digby's funeral, and Walden was sitting in his study in a very despondent humour. For the first time in his life he began to understand of how little importance he was in the world, and the reflection was somewhat tinged with bitterness. In the innocence of his heart he had fondly imagined that his proved scholarship and undoubted ability would easily have procured for him some situation by means of which he could have at least earned his living.

This view, however, experience proved to have been a mistaken one. He had advertised his desire in all the leading papers, but without result. His qualifications, it seemed, were a veritable drug in the market, and he was beginning to wonder, despairingly, whether, in spite of his confident speech, he would not, after all, be compelled to trench upon his mother's scanty income.

So absorbed was he in these painful thoughts that he did not notice the continued knocking at the door, until at length, his visitor, becoming impatient, turned the handle and entered.

At sight of him the young man rose from his seat with a cry of pleasure: "Frank!" he exclaimed, joyously, "this is indeed good of you."

"I told the girl I could find my way," the other responded, "but I had no idea how difficult it was to gain admittance into your sanctum. That is, without taking French-leave," he added, lightly.

Then ensued an awkward pause, for Lethbridge had come upon a delicate mission, and Walden intuitively guessed its nature.

Presently, finding that his companion did not speak, Frank said, "Oh, by the way, is it true that you have taken your name off the books?"

"Yes."

"Then you have no intention of returning to Oxford?"

"No! My father's death has made it necessary for me to earn my living. Have you not seen my advertisement?"

Frank shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "I have heard of it," he said, "and that is my excuse for such an unceremonious visit. It is deplorable," he continued, "simply deplorable. Can nothing be done to relieve the situation?"

Walden shook his head. "No, old friend," he answered, sadly, "unless you can find me some wealthy youngster in need of a tutor."

For a minute or two Frank remained silent, thinking. He felt nearly sure that his offer would be rejected, and yet he determined to make it.

"Do not be offended, Walden," he said, pleadingly, "but I cannot see you throwing yourself away in this manner, without endeavouring to prevent the sacrifice. You know my means; I have ample wealth; let me place a portion of it at your disposal. It will benefit you, and what you require I shall not even miss."

Walden grasped his friend's hand warmly.

"The offer is characteristic," he said, "but forgive me, Frank, if I decline to take advantage of your generosity. Believe me, it is better that I should face the inevitable at once. The struggle must come; let it begin now."

"And that is your final decision?"



"Yes! I have put my hand to the plough, and will not draw back."

"Well, if that be the case, fortunately I am able to help you, unless you object to being banished into Cornwall. No! That's lucky, for Mr. Tremayne passes most of his time there. He lives at Culme Castle, near Truro, and has a son—Howard, for whom he requires a tutor. I do not know his terms, but you may reckon upon being comfortable, for he will treat you as one of the family."

Walden smiled.

"Are we not going just a little too fast, Frank?" he asked. "At present, remember, this Mr. Tremayne is not even aware of my existence."

"Oh, there will be no difficulty; he will accept you upon my recommendation. Give me a sheet of note-paper, I will write at once."

"There," he said, folding the letter and placing it in an envelope, which he directed to Richard Tremayne, Esquire, Culme Castle, Truro, "if you are satisfied with his terms, the post is yours. And now," glancing at his watch, "I must hasten. I have an appointment. Remember me to the ladies; I trust they are bearing up under their heavy blow. And by the way, forget my little slip on the platform at Oxford. It was inexcusable I know, but you frightened me."

Walden looked at him in amazement.

"Slip!" he echoed, "I do not understand you."

"Ah! all the better then—it was nothing, a mere trifle. But now I must go. Let me hear if you accept Tremayne's offer."

They shook hands and Frank turned to go. At the door he paused hesitatingly, as though wistful to speak, but perhaps his courage failed him, for with a second good-bye he passed down the stairs into the hall.

Walden wondered a little at his friend's odd behaviour, but the prospect which his promise opened up, occupied most of his attention, and when two days later, he received a letter headed Culme Castle, he had forgotten all about it.

Mr. Tremayne's communication was eminently satisfactory. He had not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Digby, he wrote, but he was quite prepared to accept him as a friend of Mr. Lethbridge, and in conclusion he offered a salary, which to the penniless young man appeared munificent.

Isabel was in his room when he read the letter, and by the gleam in his eyes she knew that he had received pleasant news.

"The beginning of your fortune," she said, laughingly, and kissed him.

"If so, I shall owe it to Frank Lethbridge," he answered, "since it is entirely through his influence I have had this offer. Frank is a good friend."

Isabel turned her head to conceal the rosy blushes on her face, and shortly afterwards, with a woman's skill diverted the conversation into another channel.

Walden's preparations were soon made, and on the following Monday, having meanwhile had another interview with Frank, he started by an early train for Truro.

At the station he was met by a groom who informed him that Mr. Tremayne had sent a trap for the conveyance of himself and his luggage to the castle.

Walden thanked the man, pointed out the various articles which belonged to him, and was soon being driven towards his future residence.

For miles they bowled along over the hard, smooth roads, until finally the driver with a cheer, "Here we are sir," swept through an open gateway, into the grounds of a large house, which Walden saw dimly outlined behind the trees.

As the trap approached the end of the drive, the young man noticed that the front door was opened, and the hall brilliantly lit. At the top of the steps stood a tall, thin man, with head slightly bowed and stooping shoulders.

"That is Mr. Tremayne, sir," whispered the groom, "he has been waiting for you."

Walden ascended the steps slowly, and when he reached the top, the tall man, extending his hand, said,—

"Good-evening, Mr. Digby. I am Richard

Tremayne. I trust you have suffered no inconvenience, and that your stay with us will be a pleasant one. We dine to-night at seven; our regular hour is six. John," turning to a servant, "show Mr. Digby his room, and see that his luggage is taken up promptly. Adieu, Mr. Digby, for a short period."

Walden thanked him mechanically, and proceeded to his room, scarcely able to tell whether he was pleased or annoyed at his reception.

"The words were all right, I suppose," he said, doubtfully, "but his manner was unique. What an odd, brusque way, and his voice is like a human phonograph. I wonder if they wind him up!"

Smiling at his own conceit, he dressed himself for dinner, and anxious not to keep the family waiting, descended at the first bell to the drawing-room.

It was a magnificent apartment, and betrayed abundant evidence of feminine taste and skill.

Presently the door opened softly and, turning his head, Walden beheld the most lovely picture he had ever seen in his life.

A young girl of medium height, slightly built, but of exquisite proportions, dressed in some soft clinging drapery of a pale-blue colour. Her well-formed head, crowned with a mass of golden curls, was poised upon a shapely neck of alabaster clearness.

Her complexion was that dainty pink and white which the most cunning art can never hope to rival, and her eyes were a soft limpid blue.

The only ornaments she wore were a white rose in her beautiful hair and another at her breast.

The young man stood as if petrified, only that his eyes were wide open and full of life.

Suddenly the girl spoke, and to him her voice sounded like the sweetest music.

"Good-evening," she said, merrily, "I must introduce myself. I am Alice Tremayne, Howard's sister, and you must be Mr. Digby. Howard will be pleased."

"I am certainly Mr. Digby," he answered; "though I cannot conceive how that circumstance is to afford your brother any great degree of pleasure."

"Ah, that is because you did not know poor Howard's last tutor. He was an old—old man, who wore blue spectacles, and occupied his time in taking prodigious quantities of snuff."

"Yes," he said, smilingly, "your description is very graphic. Now, with regard to myself—"

"Oh, you are altogether different. You are quite young, and—oh, by the way, Mr. Digby, can you drive tandem?"

Walden had considerable control over his risible faculties, but he could not restrain the ghost of a smile from flitting across his features as he said,—

"Excuse my curiosity, Miss Tremayne, but may I ask why you have put me that question?"

"That is Howard's one accomplishment," she answered, lightly, "and the touchstone by which he tests the worth of all his associates."

"In that case," he began, "I greatly fear—"

But his fear remained unexpressed, for just at that moment the door was opened a second time to admit Mr. and Mrs. Tremayne and the gentleman of one accomplishment.

Walden forced himself to sustain his share in the ensuing introductions, though all the time the music of the girl's voice was singing in his ears, and her beautiful face dancing before his eyes.

Still he managed to acquit himself creditably, and as the dinner wore on he began to disentangle as it were, his different companions one from the other.

Mr. Tremayne he had already seen, and looking at him more closely he recognised with surprise that it was from him Alice had obtained her beautiful eyes. In all other respects the girl was like her mother, who spoke in the same soft, silvery tones which formed so striking a contrast with the harsh, metallic accents of Mr. Tremayne.

Howard, he discovered, was a typical English lad. Strong and healthy, with an abundance of animal spirits, a love of danger, and a total dis-

regard of all conventionality, he made himself a favourite wherever he went.

The dinner came to an end at length, and Mrs. Tremayne, followed by her daughter, left the table.

"Now, Mr. Digby," said his host, "do you prefer retiring to your room, or shall we have an hour's music?"

"Or pay a visit to the stables, and see the ponies?" suggested Howard.

"Thanks," said Walden, laughingly, "I shall vote for the drawing-room, though I cannot promise to take part in the music."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Tremayne, a little less stiffly than usual; "pardon me, I had forgotten. Perhaps—"

But Walden checked him, gently.

"My father was passionately fond of beautiful music," he said, simply, "we often played and sang together. To listen to some now will do me good."

His host nodded sympathetically; and without further speech they passed into the drawing-room where Alice had seated herself at the piano, and was playing in a dreamy kind of way the air of some sweet old English ballad.

"We do not go in for anything new down here," she said to Walden, with a smile; "my father prefers the simple old-world songs."

"They are very beautiful," he answered; "I could listen to them for hours."

The girl saw that he was in earnest, and for more than an hour she played and sang, song after song, until his eyes were moist with tears.

Tired as he was, the dawn had already broken when Walden Digby fell asleep, and even then he carried into his slumbers the face of his dead father, and that of the beautiful girl whose loveliness had so strongly impressed him.

### CHAPTER III.

DURING the first week or two of his sojourn at Culme Castle, Walden discovered that, unless he acted with extreme resolution, his post of tutor would be a sinecure.

It was on the third morning after his arrival that Walden produced his books and proposed that they should begin work.

Howard received the proposition with a startled air, "Oh come, Mr. Digby," he cried, "you're surely joking. Why you have not seen the ponies properly yet; I don't believe you know their names. And there are so many places of interest in the neighbourhood, forming quite a volume of history in themselves. And Alice will be so disappointed; she always reckons upon my taking strangers to see the local lions—it affords her a grand opportunity to air her learning and spout poetry—Tennyson's *King Arthur*, you know, and all that."

"Quite a family arrangement, Mr. Digby," the girl interposed with a half nervous laugh, "these expeditions prove of great service in showing off Howard's abilities as a whip—and he really is a clever driver."

Mr. Tremayne had not come down to breakfast—later on Walden found he was very rarely seen until the evening—but Mrs. Tremayne looked up from her chocolate with a smile. "Unless your life is heavily insured, Mr. Digby, I would most certainly advise you not to accompany Howard, he is extremely reckless, and no respecter of persons in what he calls his 'spills.'"

"These statements are all lies, Mr. Digby," laughed Howard, "and I will prove that this very morning. Come Alice, brush up your poetry—we will take him to the Briton's grave."

"Thank you," exclaimed Walden with mock gravity, "I perceive that you combine beauty with utility."

And thus began that strange, sweet time for Walden Digby, when in spite of his recent bereavement, the flowers once more put on their loveliest hues; the birds trilled forth their sweetest songs; the whole face of nature was illumined by some fairy light.

He knew it was madness; he recognised with a bitterness of spirit, the fact he was perpetrating, and yet he was powerless to draw back.

From the very moment of their first meeting he loved her blindly and unreasoningly, his heart had gone out to her, and every day, nay every moment strengthened her dominion over him.

And Howard too unconsciously helped forward the catastrophe. Knowing little himself and caring less about English literature, he occupied himself on these excursions almost entirely with his ponies. Thus it happened that Alice and her brother's tutor were thrown constantly into each other's society, with the inevitable result that Walden became more hopelessly in love every succeeding day.

Not that Alice offered him any encouragement, or that he betrayed his secret even by a sigh. He buried it deeply in his own breast, and only allowed it to appear at night in the privacy of his own room.

Still he experienced a sense of relief when on the third Monday, Howard announced his intention of beginning work in downright earnest, and he eagerly applauded his good resolution.

Had it not been for the bitter-sweet pain occasioned by his hopeless passion for Alice, the young man would have enjoyed his new life immensely.

Of Mr. Tremayne he saw very little, never except at dinner, and not always then.

His hostess treated him with as much consideration as if he had really belonged to the family, and with Howard he had no difficulty.

It was not until he sat down at night, with closed doors in the solitude of his room that the misery of his life forced itself upon him.

Once he conceived the idea of throwing up his post, and trying to banish the memory of his mad infatuation in some distant clime. But upon second thoughts he realised that after all, such a proceeding would be futile. Whither could he fly to escape the glance of those deep blue eyes; by what means could he clear his brain of the sweet music of her voice, or stamp out the image of her beautiful, bewitching features?

No! this love which had leaped at a bound into his life, hopeless as it was, would abide with him for ever. Never, until that day came when they laid him to rest in the quiet churchyard would it be absent from him. He might fly to the very confines of the earth, and it would be his companion—this love, concerning which, did he dare to breathe but one single syllable, he would be driven ignominiously from the house.

Sometimes he laughed bitterly at his own presumption. It appeared so utterly ridiculous for a poverty-stricken tutor to fall in love with his master's daughter.

Suppose for a moment,—and the blood surged riotously through his veins at the supposition—that Alice returned his affection! What could he do! Marry her on the salary he obtained from her father, or take her away to starve?

Everything showed him the folly and madness of his desires, but he was young, and youth is ever sanguine; he was in love, and when does true love ever really recoil before even apparently insuperable obstacles!

In another mood he asked himself why he should fail? If he could win the affection of this charming girl, that surely would spur him onward to success.

He would work; he was strong and healthy—he would spend his strength, and if need were, even his health, in the fight. He possessed undoubted natural abilities, and his time at Oxford had not been ill-spent. Other men had triumphed over far more serious obstacles—why should he fail!

He would not fail; he would boldly challenge fate, and win.

As usual when we resolve to try a fall with fate, that mystic personage is generally found prepared to accept the gauntlet, and she made no exception in Walden's case.

In the morning, after forming his resolution, the young man descended to the break-fast-room quite light-heartedly.

Mrs. Tremayne had just finished the perusal of a letter when he entered, and having given him a cheery greeting, she turned to Alice with a bright smile.

"My dear," she said, fondly, "we are going to have a little company. This," tapping the

letter, "is a note from Rosalie St. John; she is coming to-morrow with her brother."

"Don't blush so furiously, Alice," exclaimed Howard with a laugh, "the cavalier is not here in person. Thank goodness, my studies are too serious to be broken in upon. What is it we are doing, Mr. Digby? Something I know that will tax all our energies for the next fortnight. Only," with a sigh of regret, "St. John is safe to destroy a pony or two."

"For shame, Howard," exclaimed his mother, warmly, "you forget what a false impression Mr. Digby will obtain of our visitors."

"Oh, I am becoming accustomed to his ways, Mrs. Tremayne," said Walden, pleasantly, and for the time, the subject dropped.

Howard returned to it, however, when he and his tutor were together in the study.

"You don't know St. John," he said abruptly, "nor anyone else here except myself, though Alice is beginning to find him out, I fancy. George St. John is a beastly cad, though I suppose that is strong language to use concerning one's destined brother-in-law."

Poor Walden! Here was a terrific shattering of his hopes. His limbs trembled, and he was scarcely able to articulate the question which rose to his lips.

Fortunately Howard was looking in another direction so that his companion's discomposure passed unnoticed, and presently Walden nerved himself sufficiently to say,—

"This Mr. St. John, then, is engaged to be married to your sister?"

"Well, not that exactly, though I suppose it amounts to the same thing. You see, George St. John's father and my father were old friends, boys together, and that sort of thing, you know. When George and Alice were little children, their seniors thought fit to enter into some agreement, a sort of family compact, in virtue of which these two were to be married on attaining years of maturity. I do not think Alice has ever formally given her consent, but it is recognised in the family that the union will finally be ratified."

"And, unfortunately, your future brother-in-law has not found favour in your sight."

"No; candidly I detest him, but then I don't count. However, you will see him for yourself to-morrow, worse luck!" and Walden cordially echoed the sentiment.

In spite of Howard's new-born interest in his studies, the young men did but little work that morning for the tutor's thoughts were far away, and the pupil, untouched by bit or spur, wandered at will according to his own sweet fancy.

The next afternoon, Howard, in order to gratify his mother's wishes, drove into Truro, and Walden, left to himself, sauntered into the park. He had just turned into the path behind the house when he paused irresolutely—Alice herself was advancing towards him.

She gave him her hand with a smile. "If we were not so near home," she said, merrily, "I should fancy you had lost your way, you look so disconsolate."

"That is the effect of your brother's desertion," he answered jestingly; "he has run away and left me to my own devices."

"Yes; Howard is a dear good boy. He has gone to fetch the St. Johns, though I know he does not like them. But you must not allow him to prejudice you."

"No!" he said, "I will order my likes and dislikes by his sister; then I cannot go wrong."

She blushed prettily and averted her head in confusion.

"That savours of irony," she said presently, "and it does not become you."

"Nay," he made answer, "you do not allow for the delicacy of my position. If I am to be influenced at all, I must make a choice between your views and Howard's since they are diametrically opposite. Surely you would not have me so ungallant as to take sides with the gentleman?"

She looked into his face, intently. "Do not allow your partisanship to carry you too far, Mr. Digby—it may prove inconvenient in the end, and having uttered this warning, I must really hasten in."

She tripped lightly away leaving him standing spellbound. What did her speech mean? Was it a mere empty phrase? Or could it be that her secret estimate of St. John coincided with that openly expressed by Howard?

The doubt perplexed him, for on her genuine sentiments his own actions must be based. If she really loved this fellow, then of course he would make no sign; but on the other hand, should he discover that St. John was distasteful to her, he would prosecute his own suit with all the ardour he could muster.

He did not see Alice, nor indeed any of the family, again that day until a minute or two before dinner, when there was only just sufficient time for a hurried introduction to Mr. St. John and his sister.

Walden gazed at his unconscious rival with a feeling of deep interest. He was a tall, gentlemanly man, with fair hair and complexion, and finely cut features. He wore an eye-glass which he manoeuvred with considered skill, and his upper lip was covered with a heavy, brown moustache. He spoke in rather a mincing style, and exhibited one or two little affectations; but he undoubtedly belonged, both by birth and breeding, to the ranks of the aristocracy. He was an older man than Walden, and bore himself with the easy grace and assurance of a man of the world.

Even, on equal terms, Walden felt George St. John would have proved a formidable rival; how much more dangerous then would he be when he himself was so heavily handicapped!

Rosalie St. John appeared somewhat her brother's senior and resembled him in figure. Like him, she had fair hair and complexion, and her features were regular. Where they differed her brother had the advantage. His eyes were blue and not unpleasant; hers were grey, cold, hard and repellent. Her lips too were thin, bloodless and closely pressed together, while his were of an average fulness. Looking at them together, Walden thought that, had he to take his choice between the two, he would prefer the brother, and in this his instinct did not lead him astray.

#### CHAPTER IV.

DURING the first half of the dinner Walden amused himself by listening to the conversation of his employer's guests. Both brother and sister had evidently travelled much and seen a great deal of the world, and each was a brilliant conversationalist.

George St. John, however, interested him the most. He appeared to know everyone and talked of the greatest men and women of the day, as though they were all his own familiar friends. He was in good vein, and jest, anecdote, *bon mot* and repartee followed each other in rapid succession. He discussed the arts—poetry, music, painting and the drama; exposed the error of the Darwinian theory; laid down the lines of a new and improved religion; invented a fresh scheme of Government, and settled the Irish question, all with such an airy touch and confident assurance that Walden tolled after him in admiration.

Mr. Tremayne, senior, ate his dinner and maintained a rigid silence. To him these matters were a mere bagatelle. He was on the eve of a great discovery himself; he only required one small link to perfect an invention which should revolutionize the world.

Mrs. Tremayne, poor woman, blinded by this dazzling display of fire works, sat in awe-struck silence, wondering vaguely how a mere mortal could be so clever.

Alice had concentrated all her attention on Howard, as though she were afraid he would suddenly break loose, while that young gentleman divided his time by smiling sweetly at Rosalie, and kicking his tutor at every fresh point the speaker made.

"What a pity, George," he exclaimed, innocently, when St. John paused to take breath, "that you do not enter Parliament; you would effect no end of good," and to his huge delight, his unconscious victim fell into the trap.

"Yes!" he said, meditatively, stroking his moustache, "the idea is not bad, I think I shall



seriously consider it, after a certain event has taken place," and he glanced with an air of proprietorship towards Alice.

The girl's face reddened and she kept her eyes studiously averted from Walden who felt his own countenance flush.

Before the pause which followed became awkward, Rosalie St. John threw herself into the breach. "By the way, Mr. Digby," she said, in her sharp, unmusical voice, "did I understand you to say that you belonged to the Gloucestershire branch of the family? Sir Reginald is a dear old friend of ours, I might say, indeed, he has been a sort of second father to us. Of course you know Sir Reginald?"

"No, indeed," returned Walden, "I have never even heard of him until now."

Miss St. John stared at the speaker more overtly than the laws of good breeding would sanction, but her brother fortunately came to the rescue.

"Doubtless," he said, graciously, "you belong to the Derbyshire branch, though I was certainly under the impression that we were acquainted with all Lionel Digby's relatives."

"Upon my word," laughed Walden, good-humouredly, "I fear you will have considerable trouble in locating me, more especially as I am perfectly ignorant in the matter. My father, Probyn Digby, was a painter, and I, his son, am Howard Tremayne's tutor. That is all the information I can give you; but such as it is it is at your service."

Howard always maintained that Rosalie's lips met together with a report like the discharge of a horse-pistol, while her brother, after carefully screwing his eyeglasses into position, examined the young man critically as though he had been some fabulous monster recently introduced into the country.

At length, his curiosity exhausted, he jerked back his head and said with an effort,—

"Ah! dear me now, how very interesting. Howard's tutor, and we thought you were some relative of Sir Reginald. Quite a little comedy, is it not?"

"There is one thing Mr. Digby omitted to mention," exclaimed Alice, flushing hotly, "that he is our personal friend."

"Ah, just so, how very interesting, Mr. Digby has the honour of being your personal friend!"

The repetition of this phrase attracted Mr. Mr. Tremayne's attention, and having given up the idea of perfecting his invention that evening, he forthwith proceeded to inflict upon his companions a long rambling account of a personal friend of his, which might have proved extremely interesting had he not forgotten the point.

However it served to relieve the awkwardness of the situation, and at its conclusion Mrs. Tremayne promptly carried off the ladies to the drawing-room, where they were joined shortly afterwards by George St. John and his host.

"There," said Howard savagely, as Walden and he stepped on to the balcony, where the former lit a cigar, "now perhaps you begin to understand why I called St. John a cad. I could willingly have kicked him from the room."

"Instead of which you exercised your strength upon my legs," laughed Walden.

"Ah! I am afraid I did," apologetically from the younger man; "but the fellow made me wild. And did you notice Alice? I fear he will have a bad quarter of an hour in her company."

Walden's eyes gleamed with delight; true, he cared very little about St. John's rude behaviour; but it was very sweet to learn that he had such a beautiful ally, and his pulse beat more rapidly at the knowledge.

Presently throwing away the end of his cigar he followed Howard into the drawing-room, where Miss St. John was executing some wonderful march on the piano. She was a fairly good musician from a drawing-room point of view, and Walden felt free to applaud her efforts as heartily as the rest.

Then Alice and he sang some old-fashioned duets, together, while St. John scanned them curiously from his corner of the room.

"Ah!" he said, coldly, after congratulating Alice on her share in the performance, "I perceive

Mr. Digby, that you are a skilled musician. May I ask if you teach music?"

"Oh! I do not profess to understand music sufficiently well for that," rejoined Walden; "but," looking him steadily in the face, "I teach manners."

Howard laughed approvingly, while St. John's face turned crimson, and he bit his lips in vexation. His glance at Walden betokened anything save cordiality, but he did not attempt to cross swords with him again that evening—it was too dangerous a proceeding.

In order perhaps to make up for the incivility of her father's guest, Alice treated him with even greater cordiality, and as he felt the soft pressure of her hand in his when he wished her "Good-night!" he felt more than compensated for the rudeness which the St. Johns had exhibited towards him.

The morning's post brought him a letter from Isabel, whose most interesting communication related to Frank Lethbridge.

"He called on Tuesday," she wrote, "and complied with mamma's request that he would remain to luncheon. He appears exceedingly thoughtful and considerate, and is entirely devoted to your interests. Indeed, it was to obtain news of you that he called. He says he almost regrets now having induced you to bury yourself down there in Cornwall, especially as there are so many opportunities in London for a man who can command interest. I like him now very much, he does not seem so boisterous as when I saw him last."

Isabel's letter recalled to Walden's mind the scene on the platform at Oxford, and out from the hidden recesses of his memory there sprang Frank's question,—

"Is it Isabel?"

The young man's face beamed with pleasure as he re-perused his sister's letter, for Frank was his friend, and worthy of Isabel's affection.

"Nothing could afford me greater happiness," he murmured to himself as he descended to the breakfast-room, "nothing except," and the light in his eyes sparkled even more brightly.

In spite of the St. John's disagreeable manners the days flew along pleasantly enough, and their visit had nearly come to an end, when Alice suggested that they should gather together a sufficient number of young people, and have some charades.

The proposal was eagerly caught up by the rest; to Mrs. Tremayne was allotted the task of writing the invitations; Alice and Rosalie were entrusted with the furnishing of the wardrobe. Howard and George St. John undertook the stage, while Walden selected the pieces, and made drawings of appropriate dresses and scenery.

In a short time they had a band of willing helpers, who poured in from the surrounding districts, all eager to be of use, and for the next day or two, the old house rang with the shouts of happy laughter, and snatches of merry music.

Walden was unanimously chosen stage manager, and Howard volunteered his services as his assistant. Alice and the two St. Johns, reinforced by a batch of young men and maidens constituted the performers, while on the appointed night the house was packed with a host of the Tremaynes' friends and acquaintances.

The charades at Culme Castle will long be remembered in the immediate vicinity. Everything passed off admirably, and the spectators cheered and applauded to the echo. After the exhibition came supper, and then the majority of the guests departed for their homes.

It had, however, been previously arranged that several ladies whose residences lay at a considerable distance from the castle should remain with the Tremaynes for the night, and preparations had accordingly been made for their reception.

"Good-night, Mr. Digby," Alice said, "and thank you very much for your kind help. I feel that it is to your exertions we owe the greater part of our success."

"You exaggerate the importance of my aid," he answered, "but if I have really won your approbation, I am more than satisfied."

The young man retired to his room in a happy frame of mind. What was it he had

seen in the girl's face? He scarcely knew; he did not dare to ask himself too closely, but most assuredly he had seen something which caused his heart to throb fiercely, and which sent a warm glow throughout his veins.

For some time he lay, lulled by this strangely sweet sensation, until at length with a smile on his lips he fell asleep.

Suddenly he was awakened from his pleasant dreams by a smell of fire, and leaping from the bed he partly dressed himself and rushed into the corridor. Everything was in confusion. The frightened inmates roused to a sense of their peril, were dashing madly towards the hall; doors were opened and slammed violently; shrieks and cries resounded through the house, and all the while the red fire glowed, and the dense smoke crept steadily through the building.

At the head of the broad stone steps, a young girl crouched in an agony of terror. Seizing her in his strong arms Walden hurried down, and on to the lawn, where he found a terrified group.

A glance sufficed to show him that all the men were present. Mrs. Tremayne, too, he discerned, and all but one of the hapless women. Who was missing?

Then with a lightning flash he realised that Alice was still in the burning house. Forgetful of all else he cried wildly,—

"Alice, my darling, my beloved, where are you?"

In the universal excitement his words were scarcely noticed, save that they revealed the fact that Alice was not there.

Mrs. Tremayne gave vent to a hysterical shriek, and happily for her lost all consciousness, while her husband wrung his hands in despair. Howard was at the side of the house aiding the servants in their attempts to subdue the flames.

George St. John stood by his sister's side. His face was ashen grey; his knees shook with terror. Walden looked at him with unutterable loathing.

"Man," he hissed, "if indeed you are a man, will you let your promised wife die like a dog, without one effort to save her?"

The unhappy wretch made a step or two forward, and then slunk back.

"It is folly," he murmured, "she is dead by now; why sacrifice another life?"

Walden made no answer. Seizing a blanket from the cowering man he bounded forward. His brain thronged with a thousand sensations, but the one which made him deliriously happy was the thought that by the sacrifice of his own life, he might save his darling from a horrible death.

"She will learn my secret now," he murmured, and the people on the lawn gave a tremendous cheer as he disappeared behind the smoke.

Twice the suffocating curtain forced him back, but the third time, with a desperate rush he forced his way through. Fortunately he knew the exact position of the girl's room, and half-blinded as he was by the smoke, he stumbled on, groping his way as best he could.

Should he be in time? What if after all the craven-hearted St. John proved right! Faster and faster he went, though he drew his breath with difficulty, and felt the warm blood trickling from his nostrils. At last, thank Heaven! his goal was reached.

Bursting open the closed door he entered and gazed wildly around.

Yes! there she lay, the girl for whose sweet sake he was imperilling his life, partly dressed and evidently overpowered in the very act of escaping.

And yet she was not altogether unconscious, though unable to move. Her eyes opened at his approach, and she smiled feebly. He stooped and raised her.

"Just in time, my darling," he whispered, hoarsely; "place your arms around my neck, so," and as he felt the clinging embrace, a thrill of exultation shot through him. For such a reward he would have dared the terrors of twenty fires.

Quickly and expeditiously he wrapped her up, and then turned to go.

Meanwhile the fire had increased in strength, but now he cared nothing for the scorching flames nor the blinding smoke. Alice was in his arms; his lovely head resting upon his shoulder, and he was bearing her into safety.

Nearer and nearer the end came, until a mighty shout of joy rose up to heaven—the anxious watchers had caught a glimpse of him as he emerged from the house.

Still lightly carrying his precious burden, he advanced to Mrs. Tremayne, who, recovered from the first shock, was crying wildly for her child.

"Be comforted, dear madam," he said, gently, "your daughter still lives; I have brought her to you."

A dozen eager arms were stretched forth to take the half-stified girl, and then Walden's eyes closed, and he knew no more.

## CHAPTER V.

THE first face which Walden saw upon regaining consciousness was that of Howard Tremayne, who said, cheerfully,—

"Ah, Mr. Digby, glad to see you taking an interest in things again; no, don't move unnecessarily, you will disarrange the bandages."

"Is she well?" murmured the sick man, and his companion laughed.

"What a delightfully vague question!" he said; "but if it refers to my sister, I can answer in the affirmative. She is quite well and anxious to express her gratitude for your heroism."

"And the house? What have you saved of it? This is not my old room."

"No. We fitted up a chamber on the ground floor for your accommodation; but the damage has not been as great as one might have expected. The north wing has gone, and a good deal of furniture has been spoiled by the smoke and water, but that is the extent of our loss. But you did a plucky thing, Mr. Digby, and no mistake. All the people round here are wild about it; we have had bushels of inquiries. By the way, Kitty Trevannon says you blurted out a pretty little secret, and St. John is furious."

"Did I?" asked Walden, wearily. "I do not remember it, but I fancy my head is not quite right yet; I'll try and obtain a little sleep."

"Do," urged the other; "the doctor will be here in an hour or two to remove the bandages, and a little natural sleep will refresh you. If he gives a good report you may be allowed to sit up to-morrow."

Young Tremayne's expectations proved a trifle too sanguine; Walden's injuries though not at all likely to prove fatal were still exceedingly severe, and several further days elapsed before Dr. Troake gave permission for him to be removed to the invalid chair which Mrs. Tremayne had caused to be placed in his room.

"This is very comfortable," the young man exclaimed to Howard, who tended him assiduously, "the rôle of the sick man is not altogether unpleasant."

"Wait a minute," responded Howard, as the door opened, "here are the governor and the mater, I wonder where Alice is! coming by herself, perhaps," he added, slyly, "or with me when I return;" and with a bright smile all round, he took his departure.

The interview with Mr. and Mrs. Tremayne did not occupy much time. Walden listened to their expressions of gratitude, assured them that his hurts caused him but scant suffering, and thanked them in his turn for their kindness.

In truth his thoughts were not with them at all, he was wondering if Alice was really coming by herself to see him; and when his two visitors turned to go he made no effort to detain them.

Left to himself he sat and waited expectantly. Slowly, very slowly, the minutes came and went, and he had almost begun to give way to despair when once again the door was opened, and a cry of joy rose to his lips, for his fresh visitor was Alice.

He endeavoured to rise from his chair but the exertion proved too much for him, and he leaned back with a groan.

"You must excuse me, Miss Tremayne," he said, smiling feebly, "I am not quite strong yet. But this visit from you will do me good. To know that you are well cannot but hasten my recovery."

The beautiful girl came close to his side.

"Mr. Digby," she said, gravely, "I owe you my life, and I have come to thank you. Had it not been for your noble act of self-sacrifice, I must have died on that terrible night. How can I express my gratitude!"

How it happened, neither Walden nor Alice could ever determine, but he raised his face to answer her, and each read the other's secret.

"My darling," he cried passionately, and she with burning cheeks, laid her fair head upon his shoulder.

For a brief period they yielded themselves to the sweet, delicious happiness that had come to them. Caution and prudence were thrown to the winds; they recked not of obstacles; they paid no heed to the difficulties of their position; they were happy, and that sufficed.

"My darling," echoed Walden again and again, "my darling, can it really be true, or am I dreaming some sweet delicious dream to be dispelled by a rude awakening!"

She placed her shapely hand in his. "I think I have always loved you dear," she whispered shyly. "Does it really make you happy to know that you possess my love?"

For answer he kissed her rapturously and drew her more closely towards him.

"Do you know," she said presently, in a dreamy fashion, "I felt certain on that fearful night that you would come for me; was it not strange?"

"No," he averred stoutly, "I think not; it was the electric sympathy of our hearts."

Then again they were silent, for true love does not require a mass of verbiage.

Presently there came a discreet tap at the door and Alice with a last fond pressure of her lover's hand crossed the room.

"Sorry to interrupt you," exclaimed Howard, for it was he, "but as Mr. Digby is in my care, I must prevent him from having too much excitement. Besides the mater is enquiring for you," and he laughed merrily as Alice fled from the chamber.

Walden slept but little that night; he lay thinking of this new joy which had come into his life and of the impossibility of its continuance. For now that the glamour occasioned by his darling's presence had been withdrawn, he recognised clearly the hopeless nature of the task that lay before him.

He was still a penniless tutor, and had not even the advantage of belonging to any branch of the family—as St. John had clearly demonstrated.

What could he urge in support of his claim to the hand of his master's daughter! Mr. Tremayne would laugh at his proposal, and reject it probably with contempt. Could he blame him? Stern fact answered 'No.'

True, he had saved the girl's life and she loved him, but they could not live on the memory of his deed any more than on the affection which existed between them.

No, Mr. Tremayne would rightly refuse to listen to his suit and would laugh at his presumption.

But even then, one great joy remained to him, which they could not take away—the remembrance of Alice's love. Of this he could not be deprived; it would remain with and comfort him for ever.

As an honourable man he must acquaint Mr. Tremayne with what had happened, but he could not do so just yet; he must wait a few days, until his strength was more firmly established.

In spite of the Damocles' sword which hung suspended above his head, and which he knew would fall the very instant he took action, the next few days were very happy ones for Walden Digby.

The St. Johns had taken their departure, Mr. Tremayne was immersed in business, and Walden was thus left to the care of Alice and her brother.

Now Howard, who hated George St. John, had grown very fond of Walden, and seeing how matters were tending, contrived very considerably that the lovers should be left as much as possible to themselves, thus earning for himself the blessing of both.

At length, however, the time came when

Walden could no longer conscientiously delay his confession to his employer. "My darling," he said one evening, when Howard as usual had left them together, "in the morning I must speak to your father. I fear, my beloved, that the sunshine which has gilded our lives for the last few days, will be blotted out by a dark cloud. I will not hide from you my conviction that your father's reply will be unfavourable. For one thing I have little of this world's wealth, and, further, he has other designs for you."

She rested her hand lightly on his arm. "Poverty, dear Walden," she whispered shyly, "has no terrors for me, if shared in your company. And with regard to the other matter, you may tell papa from me, that I will never marry George St. John."

He kissed her fondly, a long lingering kiss, and then as Howard made his appearance, they all three passed into the house together.

Directly Walden could use his hand, he had written home, in order to allay the fears of his mother and sister, and he had also sent an account of the fire to Frank Lethbridge, who promptly replied, warning him not to lose his heart to the fair girl whom he had thus gallantly rescued. But the warning came far too late.

After breakfast the next morning Walden followed his employer into the library. The task was a disagreeable one, but it had to be faced, and although he knew his mission was a hopeless one, his great love gave him courage.

"Can you spare me a few minutes," he began, as Mr. Tremayne bade him be seated, "I have something of importance to say to you."

"Certainly, my time is at your disposal. There is nothing seriously amiss I trust."

"That will be for you to determine," Walden replied, "though I scarcely fancy we shall regard the matter from the same point of view. However, not to keep you in suspense, let me say at once that I love your daughter."

Mr. Tremayne turned in his chair and stared at the speaker incredulously.

Walden could scarcely repress a smile as he continued: "There is nothing I should think very startling in that confession. As a matter of fact I have loved her from the first day I saw her. I cannot conceive how it could have been otherwise. Recognizing the uselessness of my passion I locked the secret in my own breast, whence it never would have escaped, had it not been for the fire on the night of the charades. Now, before I proceed further, Mr. Tremayne, understand clearly that I base no claim upon the accident of saving your daughter's life. I would have made no reference to the matter, only that it led directly to the betrayal of my own secret, and the discovery of another. That other, strange as it may appear to you, was your daughter's affection for my unworthy self. Thus sir, the case stands."

"But Miss Tremayne is already betrothed; she is, one might say, as good as married to Mr. St. John."

"There, sir, speaking with all due respect, I think you are mistaken. Your daughter will never marry Mr. St. John, that is, unless she is compelled to do so."

"Then, what is it, you yourself propose to do? Marry and live here on your salary as Howard's tutor! Pardon the plain speaking, but we may as well look the facts squarely in the face."

"Precisely. I do not blame your bluntness, though it is far from agreeable. I recognize equally with yourself all the difficulties of my position, but they are not insuperable. I am young and strong, I have a fair education and influential friends who will interest themselves in my behalf. What I propose is this, that I should throw up my post here and make a bold stroke for success in the outside world. I do not seek to bind Alice. It is possible, though I do not think it at all probable, that she may change her mind, but what I do ask is, that you will not attempt to influence her decision unduly, and that when I have secured a position for myself—if she be still willing—you will sanction our union."

Mr. Tremayne gazed at the tutor curiously. "That is straightforward at least," he said, "now, let me sum up the situation. On the one hand I like you personally, and you have a certain



claim to my favour in consideration of what you did for Alice. If I give my consent to your proposal, you will go into the world with some vague idea of making a fortune.

"Fortunes, my dear sir, let me remind you, in passing, are not easily acquired. However, at the end of an indefinite period, you return, a successful man. By that time, Alice may have spent the best part of her life in that most wearisome of all occupations—waiting; and remember, that both the success and the return are exceedingly problematical. You may fail, or your feelings may undergo alteration, and what of my child's happiness then?"

"Now, on the other side, there is a gentleman whom Alice has known from her earliest infancy, whom she has been taught to look upon as her future husband. Mr. St. John may not possess your physical courage—I am not a hero myself—but he is the son of my old friend, and he loves my daughter. He is young, good-looking, with a fairly clean moral reputation, and, above all, rich enough to surround a wife with luxuries. And this, mind you, he can do at once, without waiting to make his way in the world.

"Under these circumstances, and regardless of my promise to Mr. St. John's dead father, I think you will admit my course is clear. Although not averse to you personally I must cast my vote for my old friend's son."

"And there is no possibility that your decision may be altered?"

"Honestly, no! On the contrary, I shall use all my influence to hasten this marriage. I do not know why I should tell you, but I will do so; I am a poor man myself, and I am not without hope that Alice's marriage with St. John will place my affairs on a more satisfactory basis."

Walden bowed.

"You have been very considerate throughout," he said, "and for this I thank you. Nevertheless, allow me to add, that I do not relinquish all hope, even now, of some day making Alice my wife and with your approval."

Mr. Tremayne shook his head vigorously. "An idle dream, my boy," he said, "an idle dream; do not encourage it, it will spoil your life;" an opinion, which, needless to state, Walden did not share.

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Walden left Mr. Tremayne he went straight to his room to think over his position. It could not be said that he was greatly disheartened by his employer's unfavourable reply, since he had expected nothing different, and indeed he had been rather surprised at the nature of his reception.

His suit had been rejected, and now it devolved upon him to make the next move. One thing was self-evident; he could no longer remain at Culme Castle. Even if he gave up his hopes of marrying Alice he must go away, and as yet he was by no means despairing.

As Mr. Tremayne pointed out, the wonderful plan by which he was to achieve a competency and marry Alice, was very vague and indefinite, and the more he pondered, the more shadowy it became.

But it certainly involved cutting himself adrift from his present occupation, and this, for the sake of all parties, he determined to do at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Tremayne to whom that evening he announced his intention, was entirely of the same opinion, and it was finally arranged that he should leave the Castle at the end of the week.

The night before his departure he sought an interview with Alice, whom he had not seen, save in the presence of others, since Mr. Tremayne had rejected his proposals.

"Well, my darling," she said sadly, taking her hand, "it is as I foretold; your father has refused to sanction our union."

The girl shivered slightly, but she managed to look into his face with a cheery smile. "I have seen him," she answered, "and he has told me everything."

"Including your coming marriage with Mr. St. John?"

"Yes!" merrily, "we discussed all that."

"And with what result?"

"Ah! as usual in such cases, there was no result. Papa insisted that I should marry Mr. St. John, and I, just as resolutely, absolutely refused. Have I not pledged myself, dear?"

"But," he exclaimed gloomily, "do you realise to what you are pledging yourself? To-morrow I shall be far away, and you will be left to battle alone, for Howard cannot help you. They will coax and cajole you; very likely they will use threats in the endeavour to alter your decision. Can you face that, my darling, as well the weary waiting? As your father truly says, I may never succeed. It may be that in the years to come I shall return to you a poor and broken man."

He would have proceeded further, but she checked him gently.

"Walden," she said simply, "I love you; is not that sufficient? Is my love, think you, so feeble a thing that it will change with every wind that blows?"

He took her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

"My darling," he cried, "may Heaven grant that this period of gloom may soon be over; that out of this sorrow shall come a great joy. I will work for you, my beloved, with all my might and main. To the securing of your happiness I will devote all my strength and energy, and with such an end in view I cannot fail."

"You will not fail," she said, "my woman's instinct tells me that; but even if you do, I shall still be waiting for you. Good or ill, success or failure, riches or poverty, we will share them together, and find our happiness in each other."

"Good-bye my darling," he said, "you have nerved me for the struggle; you have filled me with fresh courage, and when the fight is fiercest, and I am tempted to despair, I shall remember your words, and return to the strife with renewed vigour."

Howard drove him into Truro the next morning, after an early meal, for Walden wished to catch the first train, in order that he might call upon Frank Lethbridge, who had arranged to be in town for the afternoon.

"Good-bye, Mr. Digby," said the young man's late pupil, as the train came thundering into the station, "I'm honestly sorry you're going, and that's a fact. However, I trust that some day you will come back, when no one will give you a heartier welcome than I. Meanwhile, if there is anything I can do, rely upon me. I am afraid I cannot be of much service, but you can be sure that while I am here Alice will not be without a friend."

Walden pressed his companion's hand gratefully.

"Thank you, she may need one," he said significantly, as he took his seat in the train.

At length then he had taken the final plunge; he had cut himself adrift from his moorings, and henceforth he must battle with the stormy currents of life's ocean, until he could anchor his bark anew in some fair haven.

Frank was staying at the "Travellers' Club," and thither, as soon as the train reached Paddington, Walden proceeded.

"Well!" exclaimed Frank, with his genial, good-natured laugh, as his friend presented himself, "so you have been distinguishing yourself finely amongst our Cornish friends I understand. Not that I could gain much information from your letters, but I called at your place the other day and learned the story from your sister. So it appears you have fallen a victim to Miss Tremayne's bright eyes. It was very stupid of me, I should have warned you."

"I had fair warning; her brother told me all about the St. John episode. But we need not discuss that; the fact remains that Alice has promised to be my wife."

"But her father will never give his consent; a mule is a toy to him for stubbornness!"

"On the day when my income justifies the step, we shall be married with or without the paternal blessing."

"Bravo! I should rather like to see St. John ousted; he is such a self-conceited prig. But now to the important question of finance—what are you going to do?"

The young man shook his head sadly.

"That is the subject on which I should be glad of your advice. You see I have absolutely no experience except in book-work."

"Not upon my word it is difficult to know what to suggest. Can you write? You used to be good at English and that kind of thing, you know."

Walden blushed.

"I have earned a stray guinea or two at odd times from the magazines," he said, "and done a few articles for the papers, but nothing more."

"You don't know Styles of the *Daily Link*? Never mind, I do. Just send me along a specimen of what you can do in the newspaper line, and I'll get his opinion. I'm not much good at that kind of thing myself, but he will know at a glance if you're fit for anything. Meanwhile I'll look up the governor and see if there is anything in his line that will suit you. Of course you must not expect anything very brilliant at present. A post where the duties are light and the salary moderate, just enough to keep the wolf from the door, you know, and all the rest will depend upon yourself. If Styles gives a favourable reply, you will have to grind away, day and night, and think yourself lucky if you earn a ten-pound note once in a way. But if you really have any ability, and are not afraid of hard work, you may make something out of it. Doesn't sound very favourable, eh?"

"I can face any amount of work," said Walden resolutely, "if it will bring me any nearer to Alice, though I greatly fear your friend Styles' verdict will put me out of court."

"That we will wait and see," returned Frank, "and in that case we must look about for something else. Now you will excuse me, old fellow, for leaving you so abruptly, will you not? but I am to catch the governor I must go at once. You are going on to Eastville, I presume! Yes! well send me on the article, and I hope to forward some good news in a day or two."

They shook hands and parted, Frank to seek his father, and Walden to continue his journey homeward.

Nearly a week elapsed before he received his friend's promised communication, but when it came it amply compensated him for the delay.

"Dear Walden," Frank wrote, "at last we have made a start, and though as I warned you beforehand it is nothing dazzling, still it will do for a beginning. You have this day been elected secretary to the Standard Patent Bread and Biscuit Company, the official announcement of which will probably reach you by the next post. The salary is two hundred a year, and you will have a considerable amount of time at your disposal. With regard to the other matter, I enclose the editor's comments on your article and advise you to go in and win."

The young man's heart bounded as he unfurled the folded slip of paper, and read,—

"Judging by this specimen I see no reason why your friend should not, with practice, succeed in his design. Should he care to contribute an article occasionally, I will ensure that it shall receive consideration."

It did not amount to much, perhaps, after all, but to Walden it seemed like a glimpse of the promised land.

He said little to his mother concerning his new prospects, but to Isabel he laid bare everything—his hopes and fears, his doubts, his misgivings, and found in her a sympathizing listener.

"I should like to see this Alice Tremayne," she said, "who has made such a conquest of you. Is she really so beautiful?"

"Some day I trust you shall judge for yourself," he made answer, "but now I must run away. I have a letter to write to Frank. He is a splendid fellow, is he not?"

"He seems very nice," the girl said demurely, and Walden looking at her blushing face and lovelit eyes, easily read his sister's secret, and rejoiced in her happiness.

After finishing his letter to Frank, his next care was to acquaint Alice with the news of his good fortune, which he did in three or four closely written sheets.

"Be patient, my darling," he concluded, "and I shall yet redeem my promise. If hard

unremitting toil can achieve success, rest assured that the time will not be far distant when I come to claim my promised bride. My sister sends her greetings, and is looking forward to the day when she will be able to call you by that name."

As Frank had intimated the young man discovered that his secretarial duties were by no means excessive, and left him ample time to pursue his literary work, which he cultivated with the utmost assiduity.

He found it an uphill task at first, but he stuck to it doggedly, writing steadily day by day until he began to acquire a certain ease and facility in which his maiden efforts had been lacking.

Several articles had already been consigned to Mr. Styles, and returned with the stereotyped reply, "Declined with thanks," but at length his patience and industry were rewarded.

One never-to-be-forgotten morning he received a communication from the office of the *Daily Link*, enclosing a cheque for two guineas, and an intimation that he might forward another article.

From that day he worked with redoubled vigour and increasing success, until at length he felt with a proud thrill of exultation, that his position, though still a lowly one, was assured.

## CHAPTER VII.

At this time the young man's life was far from being an unhappy one. At odd moments, indeed, he felt rather lonely in his London lodgings; but for the most part he was much too busy to notice it. Having rigidly performed his duties as secretary to the Company he devoted all the rest of his time to literature, scarcely allowing himself even the minimum time necessary for food and rest.

Once a week he wrote to Alice, and he found his greatest joy in reading her reply.

"They had fallen back into the old routine," she wrote, "varied by an occasional flying visit from St. John—sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Rosalie. The battle was still raging between Mr. Tremayne and herself, but thus far she had remained firm. She praised Walden for his industry, and looked forward with a perfect trust to the time when he should come and take her away."

These letters were Walden's greatest comfort and solace—in fact, he allowed himself no other pleasures, save a stray visit to Eastville, and an occasional interview with Frank Lethbridge.

One evening, as he sat as usual before a table covered with manuscript, the latter gentleman walked in, looking so particularly bright and cheerful that Walden instantly began to wonder what had occurred.

"Busy as usual," observed Frank, carelessly, dropping into an empty seat, "what oceans of ink you must consume. But just put down that quill for a moment, and listen to me. Have you heard from Styles to-day? Not well you will have a letter in the morning, offering you the sub-editorship of the *Daily Link*. Of course, if you accept you will have no time for your other duties; but I should advise you to take it nevertheless."

Walden's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Take it," he echoed, "of course I shall," and instantly his thoughts wandered away to that far-off Cornish home, where his beautiful love waited for his coming.

Frank lit a cigar, and as he sat watching the curling smoke-wreaths, mounting lazily into the air, he said, nervously, "By the way I was at Eastville this afternoon."

Walden raised his head in mild surprise.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose they are well; I was down on Sunday."

"I did not see Mrs. Digby; she is keeping her room with a slight headache, but your sister appeared in good health."

Walden nodded, but made no other reply; he did not quite see the drift of his companion's remarks, and Frank stared hard at the end of his cigar.

Presently the latter said with a half-laugh,—

"Can't you guess, man, what I wish to tell you?

I have asked Isabel to be my wife, and she has consented. Shall we receive your congratulations?"

Walden grasped the other's hand.

"My dear Frank," he said, warmly, "I am delighted. You are the one man in all the world whom I would wish to see Isabel's husband. I am certain you will make each other happy."

Frank puffed vigorously at his cigar.

"There is only one thing wanting now," he remarked presently, "to get you safely married to Alice Tremayne. Isabel, dear girl, has set her heart upon it."

"It will come," exclaimed his companion, in a tone of conviction, "I have no misgivings on the matter now; Alice will yet be my wife."

While the two young men in Walden's lodgings were thus discussing their future prospects, Mr. Styles, seated in his sanctum at the *Daily Link* office was engaged in an interesting conversation with a tall, dark man of military appearance, whom he addressed as Mr. James Tremayne.

"Then have you engaged anyone to fill Read's place?" the latter was saying.

"No. I have not as yet made any definite engagement, though I have written a letter offering the post conditionally to a man who has lately been one of our regular contributors. He is rather young but smart, and can stand any amount of work. He was introduced to me by young Lethbridge. Perhaps you are not acquainted with him, but you have had dealings with his father—Sir Thomas."

"Oh, yes, I dined there the other evening, and saw the son—Frank, I think, his name is."

"You are quite correct. Well, this young Digby is a friend of his."

"Digby?" interrupted the other. "Who are his people? Do you know anything of the family?"

"Not a great deal. His father was Probyn Digby, the artist; a man who was born fifty years in advance of his time. He died, it seems, while this young fellow was still at college, and as his affairs were not too flourishing, young Digby was forced to turn out."

"Ah, thanks! At what time will he call to-morrow?"

"Eleven in the morning."

"Well, I will look in at the same time, I should like to see him."

Mr. James Tremayne drew on his gloves, and wishing the editor good-night, passed down into the street where his private cab was in waiting to convey him to his home.

"How the old things come back to one!" he murmured, as he sat later on in his cosy room sucking at his well-coloured meerschaum; "so Probyn Digby is dead! I am glad I returned that hundred pounds."

He leaned back in his chair with closed eyes, while in his vivid imagination he drew a picture of the dead and buried past. In those days the James Tremayne of the present time, the millionaire, the man who with a fraction of his colossal fortune had just purchased the *Daily Link* outright, had no existence.

Across the mist of years there rose up before him the picture of a fair-haired stripling who, perhaps, from lack of early training, or maybe from some original twist in his nature, bade fair to graduate in honours amongst the rascaldom of London.

He traced his career; he watched him from day to day, ay and from night to night, sink deeper and deeper yet in the slough of destruction. He looked on while the lad's nature steadily changed—ever for the worse. He saw him almost dead to every sense of shame sink lower yet into the depths of iniquity, until at length he even stained his hands with crime.

Then into this dark abyss there pierced a ray of light—the vision of a good man. He saw the kindly face with its noble brow and sad earnest eyes. He heard again the musical voice bidding him in tender accents to rouse himself and be worthy of his manhood.

He remembered the timely help by means of which the lad had cut himself adrift from his old associates, and started life afresh in a new world.

He followed him step by step in this second part of his career. He watched him toiling pain-

fully upwards until at length the graceless ne'er-do-well became a respected and honoured citizen of his adopted country.

Then, covering the last panel in this strange picture, was the return of the erstwhile outcast to the land of his birth.

He was strangely moved this strong, bearded man, at the memories he had conjured up, and something which looked strangely like a tear, stood in his eyes as he murmured once again,—

"So Probyn Digby is dead!"

He rose from his chair and extinguishing the light, slowly sought his couch with the unspoken determination that the father's kindness should yet bear fruit a hundred-fold for the son to pluck.

All unconscious of the rapidly-approaching crisis in his life, Walden walked down the next morning to the offices of the *Daily Link* with a light heart.

At length he had succeeded in establishing himself in an assured position. He was no longer a detached atom blown hither and thither by every diverse wind, and at the mercy of every current.

Mr. Styles received him cordially, and entered into a lucid explanation of the nature of his proposals which were such that Walden accepted them with delight.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you," the editor remarked at the close of the interview, "that the paper has lately changed hands, though that has nothing to do with the resignation of your predecessor, who has obtained a much better appointment. The new proprietor is a Mr. James Tremayne—Ah, that is his step. 'Good morning, Mr. Tremayne, this is the Mr. Digby of whom I spoke to you last evening.'"

The new comer shook Walden's hand warmly.

"So you are Probyn Digby's son!" he said, "and have you accepted our friend's offer? Yes! That's right. We must be good friends, you and I; I knew your father well in the old days. Our young friend is not in harness yet, I presume, Mr. Styles! No; then, with your permission, I will carry him off to my rooms for luncheon. Come along, Digby! To be returned with care in the evening!"

And before Walden could recover from his astonishment, he found himself hurried downstairs and into his new friend's carriage.

The acquaintanceship thus singularly formed between these two men gradually deepened into a close intimacy, until at length Walden felt himself at liberty to put the question which had been on his lips ever since their first meeting.

"Pardon my curiosity," he said, "but are the Tremaynes, of Culme Castle in any way related to you?"

An evil look overspread for a second the other's brow, but he brushed it away hastily and answered,—

"Yes, Richard Tremayne is my uncle. Why do you ask?"

"Chiefly from curiosity. When my father died I began to earn my living as Howard's tutor."

"Did you really? And was it you who saved my cousin's life? I was abroad at the time but I have heard of the incident. Has she become Mrs. St. John yet?"

Walden's face flushed.

"No," he answered, slowly, "I think not."

James Tremayne gazed at his companion suspiciously. "Does that mean you hope not?" he asked with a half laugh.

"I suppose there cannot be much harm in telling you what the rest already know," he responded. "Alice has promised to be my wife, but her father refuses to sanction the engagement."

"On what grounds?"

"Want of means, and a promise to George St. John's father."

"And what does Alice say?"

"She has emphatically refused to marry St. John, and there the matter at present rests."

James Tremayne made no further reply, and the subject dropped, but after Walden had taken his departure he crossed to his desk and drew out a communication received from his lawyer that very morning.

"It seems a great pity, Uncle Richard," he ex-



claimed meditatively, fixing his eyes on the legal document, "to forego my revenge just as I have properly compassed it. The years have come and gone since the day when you washed your hands of me, and bade me never set my foot inside your door again, but the long interval has not softened my heart towards you. And now at a word from me you will be a beggar. You will possess neither stick nor stone, nor one rood of land that you can call yours. Your name will be a byword, your children will be paupers, and in your place I shall reign. Fancy that, my respected uncle! the outcast and vagabond, ruling over Culme Castle. And yet perhaps it is scarcely fair! your children never did me harm; your wife, God bless her, ever had a gentle word and a kind smile for the graceless nephew; why should I injure them? No! I will use my power to pay the debt of gratitude which I owe to my dead friend!"

He replaced the note in the desk and sitting down, hastily scribbled a letter to his lawyer, after which he took his hat and walked down to the club.

### CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning James Tremayne breakfasted earlier than usual, and having carefully secured a packet of papers in his breast pocket, he entered his cab, which was in waiting, and ordered the driver to proceed to Paddington.

During the night he had considered the position carefully and had decided upon his course of action. He would go down to Culme Castle and interview his Uncle Richard on behalf of the separated lovers, and he did not doubt but that he should arrive at some amicable understanding.

Meanwhile matters at Culme Castle were becoming very strained, and even while James Tremayne was being whirled rapidly forward to his destination, were verging perilously near a crisis.

The two St. Johns were again paying one of their periodical visits, and almost at the moment the returned millionaire stepped into his luxurious compartment in the Cornish Express, George St. John entered his host's study and closed the door.

"Well, my dear friend," he said, eyeing the elder man significantly, "matters do not progress very expeditiously. I fear I shall be compelled to proceed to harsher measures, unless the business can speedily be arranged."

"It is not my fault," began Mr. Tremayne hotly, but the younger man interrupted him.

"No!" he said, "it is not your fault, but I greatly fear it will be your misfortune unless you change your tactics. I regret having to speak in this way, but time is gliding along, and each recurring year leads me farther from my youth. I shall soon be past the prime of life; do you realise that? And now, Mr. Tremayne, mark my words well. I love your daughter. No one can accuse me of fortune hunting. None know better than I, that you are practically a pauper, and she is penniless. But I love her, and by fair means or foul she shall be my wife in the early spring. Try her once again with smooth words, and should she still remain obstinate, tell her the truth. Tell her that you are in my power, that your land is mortgaged up to the hilt, and that unless in twenty-four hours she consents to be my wife, I will sell you up, root and stock."

"I do not like it," said the elder man, "but I must do your bidding. If only you had been the one to reclaim her, instead of young Digby!"

"Fehaw, man," exclaimed St. John, stamping his foot impatiently, "what has that to do with it! The mischief was done long before that; it was your own blindness and bad management from the first day he set foot inside the door. But we need not waste time discussing the cause, our business is to root up the effect."

Mr. Tremayne sighed. "I will do my best," he said resignedly, "I can do no more."

St. John bowed himself out, and the old man sent for his daughter.

(Continued on page 20.)

## POOR LITTLE LINNET.

—10:—

### CHAPTER XII.

NOTHING could Linnet say in answer to his appeal.

She was utterly mute and wretched—wretched beyond all words.

She thought dimly of Irene's patience and long-suffering, and then of her own affection for Gordon Noble who loved her not.

She thought frightfully of that threat of Derrick Bourdillon's, and the consequent misery of it all should he carry it out; and she wished from the bottom of her soul that she had been dead and in her grave before that night, or that she and the man before her had never lived to cross each other's path in life.

For should he forsake his home again after this unlooked-for and unhappy business, then would there be for him no hope left—no hope, no chance!

The reflection was terrible in its hopelessness, in the possibilities it foreshadowed.

And Linnet bowed her tear-stained face into her hands, and, in her bitter trouble and dejection, sobbed aloud.

"Ah, Heaven, I see how it is!" he cried at last. "You do not love me—care for me—you want me to understand that you never can! Do not be afraid to speak out. Let me hear the worst. This suspense and uncertainty are sheer torture, Linnet—give me your answer straightway, and so end them!"

"Oh, why did you ever think of me at all?" she moaned. "As you have justly said, there are hundreds of fairer and lovelier faces than mine in the world—there is nothing in me, I am commonplace enough—why not have chosen from among them? Why not have passed me by, left me in peace?"

"Dearest little one, I could not!" came the quick passionate reply. "Oh, Linnet, think of my great love! Pity me—love me!"

Before she could divine what his intention was, he had caught her masterfully into his arms, and was raining kisses down upon her lips, eyes, cheeks, and brow, notwithstanding the desperate struggles she made to free herself from that vehement embrace.

At length, however, she succeeded in wrenching herself away, and putting several paces between herself and him; much dishevelled, naturally; and, in spite of her woes and misgivings, not a little indignant and wrathful at the insult.

"How dare you!" she gasped. "How dare you do such a thing, Lord Bourdillon! Love you? Never! Be your wife? Never! Indeed, now that I am about it, I may as well tell you the truth outright. Hear it then. Even before I knew you, I feared you; when we met, I could not conquer that fear; and now, as to ever caring for you in the way you would have me—why it is and always will be a sheer impossibility, for I shall feel a dread of you just as long as ever I live!"

She gathered up her wrap which had slipped from her shoulders to the ground, and tremblingly flung it round her again.

She could not realise as yet the extent of the mischief she had wrought, though her very heart and brain seemed numbed with chilliest apprehension for what the future—the near-morrow—might have in store for the Abbey.

"Come what may," she said to herself nevertheless—"Come what may, tears, persuasions, entreaties, prayers—I will never, never marry Derrick Bourdillon. Not even for my godmother's sake will I make so terrible a sacrifice—no, not even for her!"

So Linnet, in her misery, determined then.

His voice sounded on her ears for the last time that evening—ah, in tones so mournful, so tender, so full of loving reproach, with all the passion and fire gone out from it now.

"Good-bye, Linnet," he said, the white moonbeams slanting full upon his haggard dark face, exactly as she had seen it in her dream, only that

the unholy sneer was happily wanting—"good-bye! It is no fault of yours that you cannot love me. Rather is it my misfortune, my deep unhappiness, to love you all too well. That is all. You might have saved me, dear little one; you might have made of me a good man in the end. But you see it was not to be. It is painful indeed, very, very hard, to know that you should fear me, little Linnet; I am sorry for that—more sorry than I can say. When we shall meet again in this world I do not know. Perhaps never again. So Heaven bless you now, my darling—and once more goodbye!"

And then he turned and left her, his handkerchief again to his mouth; the crimson stain on it discernible once more in the weird wan light of the ruin.

His head was bowed low, and he never once looked back. His tall form and long shadow vanished from the scene, and Linnet was left alone there to think over all that had passed.

In chill, tearless agony—for the fount of her tears was dried now—she sank down helplessly, for the second time, upon the dead monk's tomb, clenching her hands impotently in her lap, and rocking herself to and fro on the cold lichen-grown slab.

"Oh, if I might only die to-night!" she wailed aloud, "and so escape the consequences of what I have done. What shall I do—where shall I go? Oh, if I might only die!"

It was an awful despair for one so young as Linnet.

She must have been sitting for half-an-hour or more in the dewy moonlit chapel before motherly Mrs. Kidd crept in and found her there.

Linnet knew not that anyone was near her until the kind old housekeeper touched her crouching figure, thus startling her from her state of deep dejection.

"Don't grieve so—don't give way, dearie," whispered Mrs. Kidd soothingly; "It doesn't do, you know, for anyone to give way too much. Let us get out of this uncanny hole, Missy, and come indoors."

"Oh, Mrs. Kidd, is that you?" moaned Linnet, staggering up from her ghostly resting-place and clinging helplessly to the old woman. "Have you heard about it then, and—and do you know all?"

"Yes, yes, Missy," answered Mrs. Kidd, breathing hard in her excitement. "I have heard everything. But come indoors with me, there's a good child, or you'll catch your death o' cold, surely, out here in this nasty vault."

"How did you hear?" inquired Linnet drearily, her teeth chattering, her limbs quivering as with ague, as she stumbled along with the good old dame. "Who could have told you, Mrs. Kidd?"

"I happened to be with the Countess, Miss Linnet, when his lordship came in," the housekeeper explained gravely. "He looked for all the world like a regular ghost, the ghost of himself, and her ladyship and me, we could not help screaming out directly we set eyes on him. Before I could get out of the room, however, he had told us everything, in a few sharp words that struck us all of a heap like. The next minute I wondered where you was, Missy, for I guessed how bad things would be for you; and so I hurried out as fast as I could to find you, and comfort you may be. I have been searching about high and low for you, dearie. But who would have thought of looking for you among all those weeds and stones! Ah, Missy, this is a sorry night, I fear!"

"How did she receive the tidings—the Countess, my godmother, I mean?"

Linnet half wept again, clinging to Mrs. Kidd in her utter weariness and heart-sickness as though the good soul were now her only friend in the world.

"Ah, do not ask!" replied the old woman, shaking her head very sorrowfully. "You will know soon enough, all too soon, my poor child, I daresay. Come along."

"Not the front way," objected Linnet wearily, shrinking back. "Take me round to your own little door. I cannot face my godmother to-night."

So round to Mrs. Kidd's own private little

door in the rear of the Abbey they went accordingly, and like any young guilty creature in terror of disgrace Linnet crept fearfully up to her bed-chamber.

The servants were at supper, and they met no one anywhere. Once safe in her own room, Linnet breathed more freely, and then Mrs. Kidd brought up a little wine to her.

She drank it gratefully but could eat nothing. With motherly solicitude Mrs. Kidd saw the young girl comfortably into bed, arranged the room for the night, and kissed her troubled wet face.

"And could you not find it in your heart, dearie, to give his lordship some better and different answer!" whispered the old woman softly, with her honest wrinkled hand stroking Linnet's brown hair from her temples as she leaned over her and peered with a sad, questioning gaze into the poor child's swollen eyes.

"No," said Linnet, quailing under the bed-clothes—"No, no, no!"

"And not even by-and-by, dearie?" questioned the old housekeeper, more softly and gently still.

"Never—never!" cried Linnet wildly then; and the good old dame heaved a loud wheezy sigh of regret as she departed, shutting the door noiselessly upon Linnet and her burthen of woes.

"How will it end!" the young girl asked of herself over and over again—"how will it end!"

And the words with a dull persistency seemed to beat themselves into her very brain—

"How will it end!"

On the morning after her woful interview with Derrick Bourdillon in the ruins, once more like a guilty creature did Linnet creep down to the breakfast room.

The cloth was laid, she found, and the china and the urn were there on the table.

The fire looked bright and inviting, and the Countess's own small copper kettle stood down by the andirons on the hearth.

But the room was deserted, save for the presence of Linnet herself, and seemed singularly quiet.

She seated herself on the low cushioned window-seat, and waited timorously until someone should enter.

Presently Phoebe Slack came in, prim and stolid as ever, bearing a sealed note on a salver.

"Her ladyship the Countess sent me to inform you, ma'am, that she finds herself too poorly to leave her room this morning. She thought that perhaps you might be waiting breakfast for her, and there's no occasion for you to do that. You were not to wonder at her absence, her ladyship said."

Somewhat Linnet turned faint inwardly.

The message was a curious one, to say the least. What could be the meaning of it!

"And—the Earl—Lord Bourdillon—he has taken his breakfast already, I suppose, Phoebe!" questioned Linnet, faltering as she put the inquiry, though anxious to learn the truth—so terribly anxious to discover the worst.

"Lord Bourdillon left the Abbey last night, ma'am," was Phoebe's unexpected reply. "It was very late indeed when Caxton drove him to the station, I believe. They had to go all the way to Wroughton's Gate, I heard my aunt say, to catch the mail; because there was no train handy from Agglestone; and Caxton didn't get back to the Abbey till half-past three this morning."

Phoebe Slack eyed Linnet curiously as she made her announcement; had the woman become acquainted in any way with the true reason of her master's sudden flight?

Linnet wondered apathetically over the matter for a little while, but could not decide. Hardly, she thought, however; for loyal Mrs. Kidd was not the sort of person to take into her confidence her inferiors of the servants' hall. But then Phoebe Slack was her niece, and that made a difference of course.

Well, she was not surprised at the information. Had not Derrick Bourdillon on the foregoing night wished her goodbye—goodbye finally! There was no mistaking that.

And as he had left her in a crushed condition

bordering on lethargy, so was she in a crushed condition bordering on lethargy still.

"Thank you—that will do," she said to Phoebe. And then, as she turned to go, Linnet called the woman back, remembering the note on Phoebe's salver.

"You have forgotten that note. Let me have it, please."

"But it is not for you, ma'am," said Phoebe slowly, opening her eyes in expostulation. "It is for my aunt, Mrs. Kidd, to send off to Windywaste—for Mr. Noble. The Countess wishes it to go at once."

The blood surged into Linnet's cheeks at the mention of Gordon's name, and then fading out, left her very white.

So the Countess in her grief was sending for him—her stay and monitor of old in all times of trial and sorrow!

What would he think of it all when he should come to know? Would he curse her—Linnet—for blighting the life of the friend whom he loved so truly and so unselfishly? For sending him back to ruin and perdition when to save him absolutely had lain in her power!

Very likely—who should say!

She could expect little mercy, she thought, from Gordon Noble; and none whatever from the Countess herself.

Oh, what a wretched mistake throughout had been her coming to Dreadmere Abbey!

"Then the Countess is not too ill to write," she said, in a tired low voice to the lingering Phoebe—scarcely thinking however of what she was saying.

"No ma'am. Her ladyship is sitting by her dressing-room fire, wrapped in a shawl. Mr. Noble, she told me, would be sure to call after breakfast, and he is to be shown upstairs to her room the moment he arrives at the Abbey."

And Phoebe left the breakfast-room, carrying the note with her.

Left alone once more, Linnet cried a little; and the few tears burned her eyes like fire, she had wept so much over-night.

Every minute she expected to be summoned to the dreaded presence of the Countess; but each minute only added to her suspense, and did not end it.

At first she had jumped to the conclusion that the letter for Windywaste was intended for herself, and must contain a sentence on her of some sort.

But, no! She was yet as it were a criminal in doubt—a criminal with a doom unpronounced.

When Gordon Noble arrived—about ten o'clock—he brought his sister Irene with him.

The old house was so silent, so hushed throughout, it seemed almost as though

"The angel with the amaranthine wreath"

had taken up, that day, his awful abode therein.

The April morning was fitfully bright, though rather chilly; but the outside brightness only served to accentuate the depressing gloom and silence within.

Irene came softly into the quiet breakfast-room; but Gordon himself was conducted straightway upstairs to the room of Lady Bourdillon.

Linnet heard his voice and his footsteps, and her heart fluttered fast, and more than half-fearfully.

"Irene," she cried, running impulsively towards her visitor, and throwing her arms around Gordon's dear sister, "I am so lonely and afraid! Oh, Irene, come and comfort me!"

They sat down together in the roomy old tinted window, and Irene drew Linnet to her bosom protectingly.

"Tell me all about it, Linnet darling," she said faintly, bending her pale, exquisite face over that of the young girl. "It will do you good to speak of it openly. Tell me all, dearest, from beginning to end, you know."

And so Linnet as well as she could related to Irene Noble the history of that dreadful interview with Derrick Bourdillon in the ruins.

When she had finished her tears gushed forth anew; and the eyes of Irene, also, were blind and dim as she listened.

"Ah, dear Heaven! would that I were in your

place, little Linnet," she whispered brokenly at last. "All along I have seen how it would be—and—and I thought that you were learning to care for him, Linnet. It is hard and strange indeed to reflect that you should spurn the gift—the chance—which I have longed and prayed for in vain. Ah, do not deem me unwomanly, Linnet, in confessing this. I—I have loved him all my life, dear; at least, ever since I was a child. Perhaps you have guessed my secret before now—but never speak of it again, if you have done this, either to me or to anyone. Linnet, promise me that you never will."

"Irene," said Linnet, earnestly and solemnly, "believe me, I never will."

No more could she say then, for at that moment Gordon himself entered and joined them.

His brave blue eyes were not cold and stern and accusing, as Linnet had feared they would be, but sober and sorrowful enough, and yet very kind withal, as he advanced towards the two girls.

He had not looked so kindly upon her, Linnet thought, for many a long day past.

Her very soul melted within her for joy and thankfulness, under his thoughtful, pitying gaze.

Out of sheer gratitude, indeed, she could have kneeled and thanked him when he clasped her hand firmly within his, exactly as he used to do in the old, sweet, gentle, lingering way.

But in the next instant her sensations had undergone a change—a violent change—and the swift transition from hopeful dawn to complete darkness once more was too sudden, too awful and too cruel.

"Linnet," Gordon Noble said, hurriedly almost tenderly, and with no other warning or preparation for that which was about to follow like a thunder-clap. "Linnet, you must return with Irene and me to Windywaste. The Countess, your godmother, is inexorable in the matter, and refuses to—see you any more! So you must make your home as resignedly as you can with us, my poor little girl, until I shall have won for you the justice and the forgiveness which at present the Countess so unreasonably withholds."

The room seemed to swim round; Linnet closed her eyes with a shuddering sigh, and then moaned a little, helplessly.

Blindly she groped for the back of a chair or something, and then dropped without a word in a death-like swoon at Gordon Noble's feet.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ten days, ten whole, weary, monotonous, expectant days had passed slowly and heavily away for Linnet, since that terrible morning when the Nobles, brother and sister, had carried her off in a dazed condition, helpless, hopeless, and unresisting, from the old Abbey and the Countess's wrath to the lighter and kindlier shelter of Windywaste.

Lady Bourdillon had really loved the young orphaned girl once; but she was stern and unbending and unforgiving now.

Linnet had broken her heart in her old age, she averred, when she might have prolonged her days on earth in contentment, strength and happiness.

Keen, bitter indeed, though unvoiced, was her grief for the loss of her beloved son; but bitterer, deadlier, the enmity she nourished against Linnet.

Nothing, up to the present, has been heard of the Earl—no tidings, no word, no sign of any kind had come from him to the Abbey.

Once more a restless and reckless wanderer upon the face of the wide earth, when might the weathers and mourners at home dare hope to look forward to meeting him again?

Each morning now, as in past days, Mr. Noble went over to Dreadmere Abbey.

He returned invariably about mid-day, gloomy and visibly depressed, and, alas, with never a word of hope for Linnet.

Once or twice, during Linnet's banishment, Mrs. Kidd had stolen over to Windywaste under



cover of the friendly dusk; but neither could she bring a word of comfort or good news.

There was no sign of relenting in Lady Bourdillon.

They, Linnet and Irene, saw very little, of course, of Gordon Noble just now, his whole time, with the Abbey affairs and his own home duties, being once more fully occupied.

At table they came together and conversed, and that was about all.

Yet, whenever he spoke to Linnet now, his manner was kinder, gentler, altogether different from what it had been only a little while before.

The peculiar, distant coldness was gone entirely from his voice; a compassionate solicitude, which verily was as balm to Linnet's lacerated feelings in those drear dark days of her youth, had happily taken its place.

He treated her now as he treated Irene—as though she had been another sister of his own; a dear sister whom he truly cared for, and not as the total stranger she had seemed to him during Bourdillon's sojourn amongst them at the Abbey.

"Irene," Linnet said, mournfully enough one afternoon when the two girls were strolling leisurely together in the Italian garden, the peacock in all his bravery strutting near—"Irene, I cannot remain here with you much longer, you know. I must go soon."

"Go! Go where, dear!" asked Irene, quietly, not at first grasping Linnet's meaning fully.

"Why, away from Windy Waste, somewhere or other," answered poor little Linnet, sorrowfully. "It is preposterous to suppose that I am going to live on here for ever. I must find another home for myself elsewhere. I have a very little money of my own as you know—just enough to live upon with great economy—which is fortunate; otherwise I should have to be a governess, and not a very capable governess, either, I am afraid, my talents not being of a precisely brilliant order. However, as things are—"

"Oh, hush Linnet!" here interposed Irene, quickly, "never speak of that again. If Gordon himself were to hear you, you know that he would be seriously displeased."

"But I must do something for myself, Irene," persisted the girl. "I have no real home, look where I will."

"Come, do not fret so needlessly, Linnet," Irene Noble said, speaking cheerfully in order to cheer her poor little downcast companion. "Stay on with us, and wait and be patient. It will all come right again by-and-by, rest assured."

"I do not see how that can be," rejoined the young girl, still despondently. "It may all come right in a certain way, perhaps, but never, I am sure, satisfactorily."

"Be patient, Linnet," Irene said again, earnestly, "and trust to the working of the future. And recollect, darling, what I say—you must promise never again to talk of that ridiculous notion of leaving us and living alone. You have wounded me as it is."

So Linnet kissed the lovely face and promised.

"Beautiful Irene Noble!" she thought, wistfully, "can I not then learn patience from you? You, whose pure and patient life is holy and saint-like in its perfect resignation!"

Nevertheless that night, restless and perturbed in spirit, Linnet Lethbridge formed a resolution. A resolution, watered with many scalding tears—a desperate resolve called up from an aching, tired, and over-charged heart.

Yes, that self-same night, in the silence of her own chamber, at Windy Waste, crouching upon her knees, and with her little brown head pressed close to the side of the bed, her hands locked tightly together, she buried the ghost, as it were, of a fond and foolish dream.

There was only the ghost left of it now—it had dwindled away to a tot.

So dear, so coveted—because denied! But that is the way of life, and the cruel ironies thereof.

Morning came, and Linnet entered the breakfast-room at Windy Waste to find Gordon Noble alone there, standing at the open window, with the sunshine streaming about him.

Irene was not yet down from her room, and Linnet was glad that it was so.

"Linnet, you have been crying!" said the master of the house, quickly, the moment he had taken her outstretched hand. "Tell me what the trouble is—come!"

"No trouble exactly," she faltered, very low, "only I have come to a resolve, and—and it has cost me something to make it. That is—possibly—knowing everything—it may surprise you," she stammered.

"Let me hear it, and judge," he said, quietly. And he leaned his shoulder against the window shutter, thrusting his hands deep down into the pockets of the Norfolk jacket he wore.

"Very well—you shall," she sighed. "Mr. Noble, I want—I want you to be good enough to—"

Then Linnet stopped, and felt very cold all at once.

"Yes!" he interrogated, kindly.

"I want you to help me—to do me a favour if you will," she almost whispered now.

"You have only to name it," he said, in the same quiet, kind way.

"It is this then. I want you, Mr. Noble, to put a kind of message or advertisement in the second column of the *Times* newspaper on the front page, you know, and in the other leading papers as well, please—the 'agony' column, I believe I have heard it called," said Linnet, desperately. "If you will send it for me—and—and manage it all properly—I will tell you what to say, Mr. Noble."

She ventured to glance up at him as she spoke. She noticed that his brow was contracted, and wondered why—that his lips were twitching as if beyond his control.

When he opened his lips again, his voice sounded harsh and unlike his own.

"Whom is the message for?" he demanded.

"I think you must know," she replied, timidly.

"You will not refuse to help me?"

"Refuse? Oh no—of course not!"

"I have thought it out carefully," continued Linnet, with another involuntary sigh, "and know precisely what I wish to say. Will you be kind enough to take a piece of paper and write it down—now, at once? There are but a few words."

He took out his pocket-book in silence, opened it, and prepared to write, his hand trembling perceptibly as he held the pencil.

"I am ready, Linnet," he said, but without raising his eyes from the open pocket-book in his hand.

With a sort of gulping effort she cleared her throat to speak; but her eyes were filling slowly, and the fair view from the open windows had to Linnet's gaze grown all bleared and misty, as if seen through a veil of fine gray rain.

Gordon Noble had to speak to her again.

"I am ready," he said gently, for the second time.

"Write this down, if you please," said Linnet hurriedly, "and alter it afterwards, if you think it will not do and you can better it:

*From Linnet to D. B. Return to the old home where the mother is grieving sorely. She is waiting for you. So am I. Come back to us, and it shall all be as you desired before you went away.*

"That is all, thank you."

He scribbled it off quickly, and dropped the book back into the depths of his breast-pocket.

Then he looked the young girl steadily in the eyes, and she saw then how very pale he was—and wondered again.

"You have not, I trust, decided in this matter too hastily and without due reflection," he observed, his voice still sounding harsh and constrained.

"I think not," she replied. "And besides," she went on drearily, "it seems to me the only thing that can be done. Matters cannot go on for ever as they have been going on lately. The Countess will forgive me now perhaps, and that will be something gained. Standing as I do, so utterly alone in the world, I cannot bear this estrangement from my godmother—my own dear mother's chosen friend."

"Are not we, Irene and I, your friends likewise," said Gordon almost sadly.

"Oh, yes—I know it! You are more than good to me," answered Linnet, with half a sob,

"but something for the Abbey and my godmother must be done by me all the same," she added, incoherently. "It was I who wrought the mischief—it lies within my power to repair it, Mr. Noble," she said, pathetically; "tell me that you think I am acting for the best, that the course I have determined to follow is a wise one at least!"

There was a great wistfulness which puzzled her greatly in his clear blue eyes as he said,—

"You do not love Derrick Bourdillon, do you, Linnet, or you never would have sent him away?"

"No, no, no!"

"And he—he loves you himself, well, and devotedly?"

"He said so—I believe he does."

"Then possibly you are acting for the best—I cannot tell," said Gordon, moodily. "Because if any woman on earth can save him, it is you who can do it; and, everything considered, perhaps it is your duty to do this thing, Linnet. But I say again—I cannot tell. You see, it is not as though you loved anyone else—another man—is it? Your heart is wholly free, so why not be merciful and save Derrick Bourdillon? He need not have gone away, after all, Linnet!"

Linnet could only wring her hands in secret anguish. He knew not what he was saying! He knew not how he was making her suffer!

"Of course we do not in the least know where he may be at the present moment," he continued; "but rest well assured that, should this message of yours meet his eye at any time, it will be the means of bringing him speedily home."

Speaking, Gordon Noble turned from the window, and Linnet cried out in her own heart—

"My life is wrecked indeed!"

Irene, coming in presently, found them both silent.

She flushed and trembled a little when Gordon explained to her the drift and substance of his late conversation with Linnet, but she received the news dispassionately on the whole, and passed no comment on it of any kind when her brother had finished speaking.

So that was the result of poor little Linnet's burying her love for Gordon on the foregoing night.

Since he never could be anything to her, she cared nought for the future nor what might become of herself in it.

Any sweet lingering shred of hope that may have been cherished in her breast, influencing her perhaps in all things hitherto, was dead now, and the pale ghost of it hidden away for ever.

Since happiness was not for her in this world, why, she would sacrifice her life to secure the happiness of others. That would be the better and the nobler way.

But thorny enough generally is the path of duty. And Linnet prayed humbly that her feet might be kept from stumbling, and her heart from fainting, when the time should come for her to tread that path uncomplainingly.

A little later on, and the message from "Linnet" to "D. B." was figuring boldly amongst the other "agonies" in all the leading morning papers.

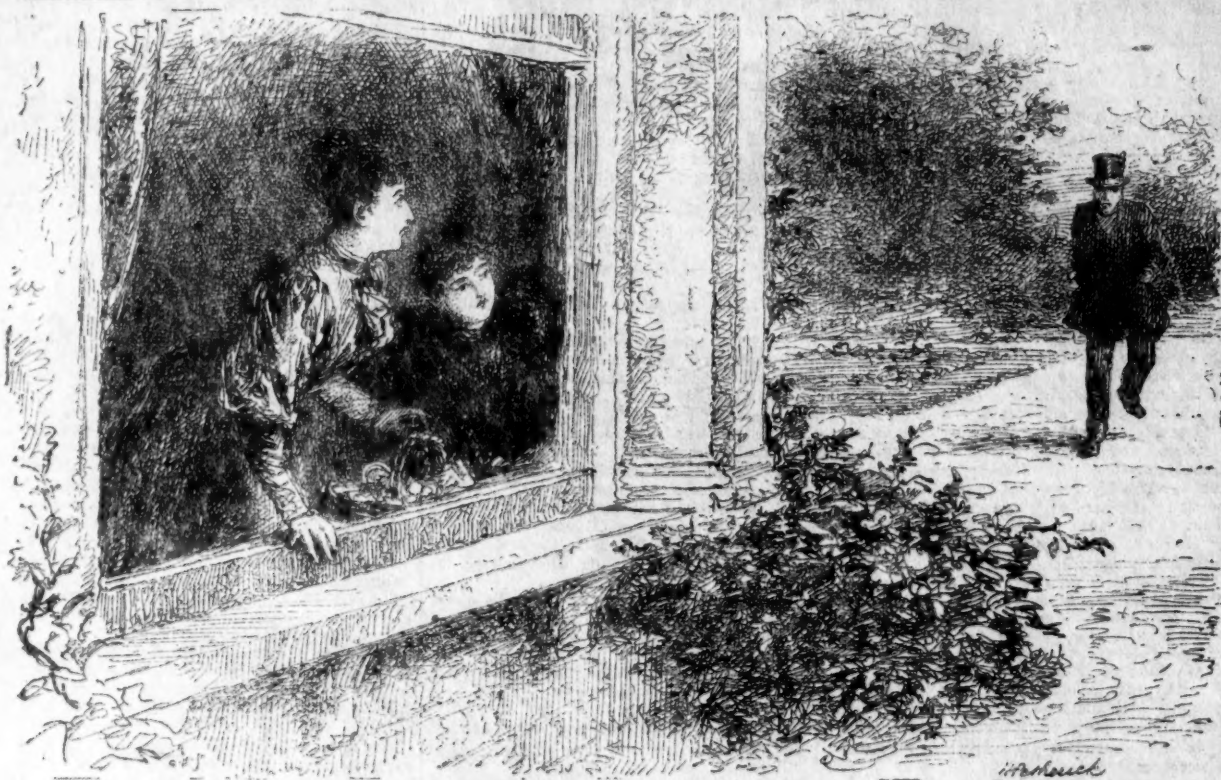
She could scarcely realise the full significance of the step she had taken, until she beheld right under her eyes those staring printed letters which would make known to Lord Bourdillon, should his eye happen to alight upon them, that she—Linnet Lethbridge—had thought fit to repent of the answer she had previously given him, and was now ready, for the asking, to give him another and different one.

The favourable one, in brief, she had denied him at first!

And Linnet simply loathed those London morning papers so long as her own appeal to Derrick Bourdillon figured therein.

She was still with the Nobles at Windy Waste, for the Countess had expressed no desire for a reconciliation.

Indeed, whenever Irene went over to the Abbey to visit Derrick Bourdillon's mother, which was often now, she—the Countess—would never even mention the name of Linnet, nor



"LINNET, LOOK!" IRENE EXCLAIMED; "HERE COMES THE FOOTMAN FROM THE ABBEY."

would she suffer it to be mentioned in her hearing.

Of course Lady Bourdillon knew what Linnet had done, but how could she tell as yet whether any good result or not might come of that message in the newspapers?

She could only wait and watch, hope and pray, like her neighbours the inmates of Windy waste.

And the suspense of that daily waiting and watching was simply terrible for the lonely old woman by her desolate hearth at Dreadmere Abbey.

One morning—it was cloudless late May weather now, with lambs and golden buttercups in the meadows again, and lusty young rooks squabbling in the swaying elm-tops—one morning they rose from their beds as usual at Windy waste, never dreaming of what was about to happen before the night closed in.

Gordon left his house after breakfast a little earlier perhaps than was his wont, for his customary morning visit to Lady Bourdillon.

He had been absent some two hours or more, and Irene and Linnet were then sitting with their work-baskets in their favourite place—the large window of the study.

"Linnet, look!" Irene exclaimed presently. "Here comes the footman from the Abbey. He is running! Can anything have happened there, I wonder?"

Their first thought, naturally, was of Gordon and his safety. The window was open, and Linnet leaned out eagerly.

As soon as the man caught sight of them, he left the path which led round to the rear of the house, and hurried up to the open window instead.

"What is it!" Linnet herself demanded, unable to curb her anxiety and impatience.

The man was breathless from his run across the park. Without any explanatory word, he touched his hat and held out the note.

Linnet took it, but saw that it was addressed in Gordon's handwriting to Irene.

And Irene sat down very pale to read it without delay.

As for the messenger himself, he lingered, now, curiously, as though bursting with some important news or other, which doubtless he would have told on the spot, could he have found the breath to tell it with.

So Miss Noble despatched him round to the housekeeper for beer wherewith to refresh himself.

And then he vanished with alacrity.

"Your brother—" began Linnet quickly, when they were alone.

"He is well," put in Irene, trembling as she rose suddenly from her seat; "but—but—"

She broke off, unable to proceed; and handed back the pencil note to Linnet.

"Read for yourself," she gasped.

And at a glance Linnet read the pencil scrawl. It said only:

"Come over to the Abbey immediately—you and Linnet. Derrick arrived last night. Is very ill. Countess distraught. He has asked for you both. Lose no time.

"Gordon."

They did not speak again, but hastened upstairs together in mournful, ominous silence. The shadows were indeed deepening, they knew.

Looking back sometimes to that hour, from the calm and security of her present life, and musing over this portion of the past, it seems to Linnet passing strange that she and Irene Noble could thus have remained firm friends and dear sisters through it all, with a man's love, a man's hand as it were, for ever rising up to turn them against each other.

Linnet feared the man. Irene loved him.

Linnet would have died to be free of him. Irene would have died for his sake.

That which would have filled the life of Irene with unspeakable sweetness had embittered and shadowed Linnet's, as she believed, for evermore.

Yet they were as friends—not as rivals. As sisters, not as foes.

Linnet herself could never understand it, and perhaps never will.

(To be continued.)

It is said that the cobra carries in its mouth a small stone that when warm is capable of giving out a faint, white light that resembles the lamp of the glow-worm. The serpent takes advantage of this resemblance to furnish himself a dainty dessert of fire-flies of which he is very fond. The winged insect is attracted by the supposed glow-worm, which is the female, and falls an easy prey to the wily cobra.

AN Asia Minor railroad, extending from Iameed about sixty miles east of Constantinople, three hundred and nine miles east by south to Angora, is built almost entirely of iron. The rails, sleepers, telegraph-poles and bridges are of this metal. There are sixteen tunnels, the longest being nearly fifteen hundred feet from end to end. There are twelve hundred bridges of iron, of which material an almost incredible amount was used. The greater part of it was furnished by the great Krupp works. Railway building in that country presents engineering difficulties that throw many of our own undertakings quite into the background.

THERE are no flower beds in a Japanese park or tea-house garden; in the little ponds the irises and lotus bloom, and in odd corners there may be clumps of lilies, chrysanthemums, or other plants, but these are mere accidents; the designer's aim is a composition of rocks, shrubs, stone lanterns, ponds and bridges, which will look the same in its general features all the year round, and to conform to established rules. The decorative garden is quite distinct from the flower garden, where the fine varieties of iris, peony, and chrysanthemum, for which Japan is famous, are grown by professional florists, or by rich amateurs who make gardening a hobby.





A WOMAN'S LYNX EYES HAD NOTICED KENNETH AND KEPT THEIR WATCH ON HIM.

## STEPCHILDREN OF FORTUNE.

—10:—

## CHAPTER VIII.

It was not only anger at Aunt Mary's suggestion which made Etta Stuart desert the family sitting-room. Truth to say she had been looking out for an excuse to get away for more than an hour, but her aunt was wont to ask inconvenient questions, and the girl was a bad hand at parrying them.

Safe in her own room she dried her eyes, put on her hat, and knotted a lace scarf carelessly round her shoulders; then she went downstairs, hushing her footfall carefully as she passed the parlour-door, but she need not have feared. Mr. Bates had only just arrived, and in the interest of listening to him even the blind man's ears did not note the light footfall, or the almost noiseless closing of the door.

It was not the first time by many that Etta had crept out to meet her lover, but she was usually earlier at the trying-place. Now she half-fared that Kenneth would have given her up and gone away.

A first-class waiting-room at London Bridge Station was the spot chosen by the lovers, for the pleasant garden made out of the old burial ground of St. John's was shut now at half-past seven, and Southwark Park was too far afield, but on the whole the dull waiting-room suited them very well.

Kenneth's friends were not likely to frequent London Bridge Station after seven o'clock, and the Stuarths took few railway journeys, and certainly never indulged in travelling first-class.

Etta was nervous and over-anxious. The constant excitement in which she lived was telling on her; there was a worn look on her pretty face, and her eyes had a feverish sparkle which would have made a mother's heart ache. She came into the large room slowly, looked carefully round once or twice, and then sat down by the centre table. Just at that moment a gentle-

man passed through the great awing doors and came leisurely up to her.

"I had just given you up," was Kenneth Bertram's greeting, "come along, we can't talk here."

Truth to say Kenneth was getting rather weary of his part of the intrigue. He liked and admired Etta. He was fonder of her than he would ever be of Beryl Hunter, but the inconveniences of the affair became clearer to him as time went on, and he would gladly have shaken off the girl to whom he had taught such a terrible lesson of conceit.

Nothing of this was visible in his manner. He drew her arm through his and went out of the station, turning after a few minutes brisk walking into a long narrow street, which in the day time was generally crowded with waggons loading and delivering goods, but which was now utterly deserted, save that now and again the tall figure of a porter passed on his way to some warehouse to guard which he was particularly engaged.

It was a strange scene for a lovers' walk. The high buildings (so many stories up that their tops seemed well-nigh to touch the sky), lined either side. The pavement was narrow, indeed, and the roadway only just wide enough for the waggons to pass each other. There was not one single thing in the whole street to attract the eye, it was all uniformly given over to business; only now a strange hush had fallen over it, and looking up to the narrow strip of sky, which was all you could see of Heaven, in Water-street you caught sight of the new moon, which had just begun its short career.

"Well," said Kenneth suddenly, "you are very silent to-night, Etta. What are you thinking of, little girl."

He might feel her a burden in his way when they were apart. He might resolve to have done with this folly and be faithful to the heiress he hoped to win, but in Etta's presence he was her lover still. The girl had over him a wonderful

fascination, which stirred his shallow worldly heart as nothing, and no one, had ever done before.

"I'm thinking," said the girl slowly, "I don't know how to put it into words, that you'll believe Kenneth, but indeed it's true. I can't bear this much longer, there must be a change."

The very words when he was away from her he resolved to speak at their next meeting, but yet it did not please him that she should say them. The nature of the man was such he preferred to be the forsaker not the forsaken.

"What, getting tired of me," he asked lightly. "I always knew women couldn't know their own minds. I suppose you find that doctor fellow more agreeable than you fancied."

"You don't understand," there was a kind of suppressed fury in the girl's voice. "I mean I can't be put off with excuses and promises any longer. You say you care for me. Let me tell my father I have met someone I can love better than poor Bob. Let me break my engagement to him and leave off making my life one long lie."

"Softly," said Kenneth, when she paused from sheer exhaustion; "just remember, Etta, what I told you the day you left Barton; if I own to any other engagement before the three months my uncle mentioned have expired, he'll wash his hands of me and I shall be a ruined man."

"But, you told me your cousin did not care for you—that she was certain to reject you!"

"So she will," said Kenneth, gravely; "but the matter's dropped by mutual consent till September. Come, Etta, be a sensible child, it's not long to wait!"

"But," there was something like a sob in her voice; "it's in September that Bob wants to be married. I did tell him to-day that it was a great deal too soon, but he only looked at me reproachfully."

"He must be very dull not to take the hint."

Etta sighed.

"He comes to our house pretty often, and if

he's not there he waylays me in the street, and he tells me of the things he's bought, and the plans he's made; and oh, Kenneth, he's such a good fellow, and somehow when I listen to him I feel as if I were the wickedest girl that ever lived."

"You've got too tender a conscience, Pet," replied Kenneth, promptly. "You shouldn't think about things that worry you, I never do."

That was strictly true.

"I can't help it," said poor Etta, slowly; "and they're not nice to me at home; Aunt Mary's always saying she wishes I was married and gone; and even Elizabeth, who never had a lover in her life, lectures me and says I'm not good enough for Bob."

"Perhaps she wants him herself!" suggested Bertram.

"No, she doesn't; Betty will never marry anyone, she's just cut out for an old maid."

"Well, Etta, the decision rests with you," said Kenneth, his low tone full of lover's tenderness; "if you're so tired of this deception, as you call it—that's a harsh name I think—that you'd rather marry Mr. Dawson than wait for me, why I suppose I can't prevent it."

"You know I couldn't do that, Ken," said the girl, eagerly; "nothing in the whole world would make me false to you, and I'd sooner throw myself into the river than marry Bob! But oh! I am so tired of pretending. Mayn't I just tell Elizabeth, and let her break it to Bob? I needn't even mention your name, and if I did they wouldn't know who you were."

"Yes, they would," retorted Bertram. "Has your brother never mentioned my name to you? he knows it well. I have seen him several times!"

"You know Jack?" and Etta's surprise was genuine. "I can't imagine where you met him!"

"Then I'll tell you; he is one of my uncle's clerks."

"Is your uncle Mr. Hunter?"

"Yes; don't speak the name with such awe, Pet; he's nothing but a fairly successful merchant. If I'd gone into trade I might be as rich as he is."

But Etta had heard too much of Mr. Hunter's importance at home not to stand in dread of such a powerful person.

"And your Cousin Beryl is his daughter?"

"His only child and heiress," replied Kenneth.

"Why, my Pet, don't speak in that heart-broken tone! Haven't I told you I care nothing in the world for Beryl, and that a certain little girl is dearer to me than life?"

"But she is so rich, and I have not a penny."

"Nor have I," said Kenneth, cheerfully; "we are both fortune's step-children."

"You don't go to your uncle's office often," said Etta, "or you would have known Jack has left!"

"I hardly ever go," replied Bertram, who did not think it necessary to say that he knew perfectly why her brother had been dismissed. "What on earth has Jack left for? I suppose he found something better; he easily could; my uncle pays shockingly low salaries."

"He left because he was sent away," said Etta, with a choked sob. "Mr. Hunter suspected him of stealing a cheque, and though he didn't prosecute him, he sent him away at once."

"That's hard lines," rejoined Mr. Bertram; "cheques are only flimsy pieces of paper, and this special one may have blown out of window or up the chimney."

"It was cashed that very afternoon, and the bank clerk described the person who presented it as 'tall and fair.'"

"Hundreds of young men are 'tall and fair,'" retorted Kenneth; "I am myself."

"Oh, don't jest about it," said Etta. "It's terrible; Jack goes about all day with a face as long as a chief mourner's. Aunt Mary and Betty spend half their time in crying, and father just sits in his chair and looks heart-broken."

"What does the immaculate Bob say to it?"

Ken; "if he's very particular he may make an excuse for offering you your freedom."

Oh, he's furious that anyone should think

Jack could be a thief. He believes in him as firmly as we do."

"Do you believe in your brother's innocence, Etta, then?"

"Yes," replied Etta, "I do believe in it; but I get very angry with the others for making such a fuss, because you see, Ken, the cheque couldn't go without hands; besides, a man has been at the bank with it in his possession. Some one must have taken it, and I told Betty only to-day she'd better try and find out who, instead of spending her time lamenting Jack's wrongs."

Mr. Bertram kept silent a few moments. If the Manager Mr. Bates had joined in that walk he would have noticed as Kenneth paused beneath a gas-lamp that his cuff-studs were of rich dead gold with a small raised key in the centre of each of black enamel; but Etta had not heard Mr. Bates' information, and she never even noticed her lover's cuffs.

Kenneth decided it would be a very bad day for him if Etta's advice was put into practice; aloud, he said, cautiously,—

"It's a bad business."

She turned to him plaintively.

"Oh, Ken! you won't let it part us?"

"Part us, no! But don't you see it makes it a hundred times more difficult for me to speak to my uncle about—about us?"

"Why?"

"Well, he's a very sharp man of business, and there's nothing he hates so much as being cheated. If he believes your brother has robbed him, is it possible he will be pleased at hearing that the girl I want to marry is the sister of his dismissed clerk. Really, Etta, after this we must wait a bit."

"How long?" said the girl, plaintively.

"Oh, just a few weeks, it will soon pass by; as for Mr. Bob, if he gets troublesome, just tell him you have changed your mind and will have nothing more to do with him."

"Then you don't know what they are like at home. I believe, if I broke off things with Bob, they would turn me out of doors."

There was no one looking; they were at the end of the narrow street, Kenneth Bertram drew the girl close to himself and kissed her passionately on the lips.

"If that happens, sweetheart, come to me."

"To you?"

"I can take better care of you than anyone else in the world," he whispered, "because I love you most, my uncle need not be told of our happiness. So little girl, if things in Church-street get very bad—come to me."

The clock of St. John's church rang out the hour of ten, Etta started as though she had been shot.

"Oh, what shall I do!" she cried; "Kenneth, what is to become of me, at ten o'clock everyone at home goes to bed. Aunt Mary lock's up and turns out the gas as the clock strikes."

"But you told me you had a lodger," objected Kenneth, "she can't make him go to bed at ten."

"No. He sits up ever so late, but then he turns out his own gas. He is very seldom out after ten, and never without giving notice."

"What a good young man. Is he young?"

"I have never seen him. I was so angry with Betty for bringing us so low as to take lodgers, that I won't show any interest in him. But oh, Kenneth, don't talk about that, don't let us waste another minute. Oh, if the house is locked up what shall I do?"

He drew her hand again in his arm and walked rapidly along till they found themselves in Tooley-street.

"Will you have a cab, my Pet?"

"No, oh no, cabs never come down Church-street, it would make quite a commotion."

On and on they walked till they reached Ashley Green. The moon lit up the scene with a kind of weird beauty, the statue of the foundress of the Grammar school looked in that soft, silvery light, not unlike a guardian patroness watching over her humble tenants. The deserted garden had a strange solemn peace, even the grim old church was picturesque now.

There were plenty of people about, the trams were still running and doing a brisk trade too. A prevailing odour of fried fish showed that the

supper shops were prospering, the passers by looked sheepily at the pair of lovers. Such a strikingly good-looking couple were rare, besides there was a stamp of fashion about Kenneth not common in Ashley Green.

"I'll wait till I see you safely in," said Mr. Bertram. "Yes," as she protested, "I can't go away till I see the door opened."

He stayed in the shadow where he thought himself unperceived, but a woman's lynx eyes had noticed him and kept their watch on him, a woman who had been beautiful once, but from whom every trace of youth and beauty had disappeared. Anger, suspicion, fear filled her eyes as they rested on Bertram's face, but there had been a strange yearning tenderness in their depths when she fixed them on the girl at his side.

A loud knock, Etta's hand trembled violently, she did not know in the least whether Aunt Mary would consent to open the door. She felt pretty sure a terrible lecture awaited her. She was almost desperate at the thought of the cross-questioning in store; but she never dreamed of what really happened. As she knocked at the door someone from within opened it abruptly, and she fell almost into the arms of the man whose good honest heart she was doing her best to break—Bob Dawson.

## CHAPTER IX.

"I don't believe it."

The speaker was Beryl Hunter; the scene, the dining-room at the Firs; and the time, the very evening on which Mr. Bates had carried his message of faint consolation to the unhappy family in Church street.

Mr. Hunter put down his knife and fork to look at his daughter. Her vehemence surprised him, because Beryl was, as a rule, a very gentle girl, who always took his judgments as her own. She had called at the office, that afternoon for her father. He had already left, but as she passed through the clerks' office she had seen Jack Stuart was absent. At dinner she had broached the subject to her father, and demanded if the absentees were ill; Mr. Hunter had put her off with a meaning glance, while the servants wore in the room. But when the dessert was on the table the merchant had given her a full and particular account of his injuries, with the result that she expressed her sentiments in the short, emphatic sentence just recorded,—*"I don't believe it."*

Mr. Hunter put down his silver knife and fork, left his peach untasted, and began to reason with his defiant child.

"You know very little of business, Beryl, but I suppose you'll admit the cheque didn't disappear without hands."

"It might have blown out of window, papa, and whoever picked it up have rushed off to the bank with it at once."

"There are just two reasons against your theory, my dear; my windows were closed and bolted, also my room does not face the street."

"Well, I don't believe he did it."

"Why have you taken such an extraordinary fancy to Stuart; you can't have spoken to him twice."

"No," she shook her head, "and I don't call it taking a fancy to him. I am sure from his devotion to his blind father he must be good, and a good man wouldn't steal; besides he is a gentleman."

"He's the shabbiest clerk in my office. I took him to oblige Bates, who has a sentimental friendship for the family, because he went to school with the father, but he never looked up to the post."

"A junior clerk's post can't want much brains."

"I didn't mean that," said Mr. Hunter testily, "but that he didn't dress well enough for the position. When one pays a fellow ninety pounds a year he ought not to be remarkably shabby."

"Well, with a blind father, an old aunt and two sisters partly dependent on him, there couldn't have been much margin for dress."



"I wonder what he used the five hundred pounds for," said the merchant gravely. "I suppose they have all launched out into new clothes and other luxuries."

"You'd better go and see," said Beryl; "perhaps if you found them going on in just the same poor and shabby way, you'd believe in his innocence."

"If Jack Stuart didn't take my cheque—who did?" persisted the merchant. "I'm sorry enough about it, Beryl, for the lad's future is blighted, and Bates tells me the blind father takes it very much to heart."

"Where do they live?" demanded Beryl, suddenly, "couldn't you go and see them?"

"My dear, a man can't go and visit a clerk he has dismissed for theft—and Bates tells me the Stuarts are frightfully proud, boast that they descend from some Scotch king, and are quite stuck up because the family have lived over a hundred years in one house. I shouldn't have thought a century at Ashley Green much to boast of, and Church-street is the oldest, shabbiest part. Still pride's a cheap luxury, and I've no wish to interfere with theirs, only you see they're not the kind of people one could send a five pound note to, however badly they wanted it."

"They want it badly enough, I expect," said Beryl; "but oh, father, I hope you paid him a full quarter."

"He was a weekly servant, my dear. He had his thirty-five shillings the week he left."

"And that was a fortnight ago—they may starve, papa; it's hard enough to get work with a good name, let alone a tarnished one."

"There don't talk of it any more," said the merchant, "it's the first thing of the kind that's happened all the years I've been in business, and I hope it'll be the last. I'd have paid the five hundred pounds twice over to have prevented it. Now let's change the subject. Where's your cousin to night?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

Mr. Hunter shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear girl, don't you think you carry this too far. I have heard you laugh at girls who exact perpetual attendance from their lovers; but you and Ken seem to go to the other extreme. I am sure he is here a great deal less than before you were engaged."

"We are not engaged," said Beryl gravely; "you know, papa, I told you just how it was left. He made a fuss when I refused him in May, and as you wished it so much, I told him I would think about it, and he might speak to me again on the 1st September, but that is not being engaged."

"I'm sure he told me you had quite settled things. I suppose the wish was father to the thought."

"Perhaps! Papa, if he does ask me again I think it will have to be 'No.'"

"Beryl."

"I've done my best," said the girl, sadly, "I have indeed, papa, but I can't get to like the idea of spending the rest of my life with Kenneth. I know he's very pleasant, and awfully agreeable and good-looking, but—he's not thorough."

"I wish to goodness, Beryl," said her father, speaking with more irritation than she had ever seen in him, "you were not so romantic. The world's a dry, matter-of-fact place, my girl, and you won't find knights and heroes in it. Solong as people like each other and get on together, that's all they want for matrimony."

"You did more than 'like' my mother," objected the girl.

That softened him, he even passed his hand rapidly across his eyes, as he said quickly,—

"Well, my girl, I expect you'll take your own way, and so that I don't have to lose you yet, I suppose I must be contented, but it'll be a bit of a blow to Kenneth. You are a beauty and an heiress, too, Beryl, and the combination's rather scarce."

"I fancy, papa," said the girl, cheerfully, "Kenneth has found another beauty. I saw him a little while ago on the Common walking with a very pretty girl."

"What common?"

"Barton! It was in June. Two or three

other people have told me of this, too. The girl was dark and wonderfully fascinating in appearance. I don't say," went on Beryl, smiling, "I should have learned to care for Kenneth if I had not found this out, but I confess the idea of his carrying on a clandestine flirtation with another girl at the very time he professed to be in love with me,—well, it rather disgusted me."

"I should think so," and Mr. Hunter's fist came down on the table noisily. "Well, Beryl, that settles the matter, and when Mr. Kenneth does condescend to turn up here, you may give him his *congé* as soon as you like. I shouldn't say a word in his defence you may be sure."

"I wish you would tell him," she said coaxingly. "Couldn't you call at his chambers and just mention incidentally that he needn't trouble to come down for my answer on the first because my mind is quite made up?"

"I'll see about it," said the merchant gravely. "I never have been to his chambers, Beryl, he has never asked me. You see, most of his acquaintances are fashionable folks, they might turn up their noses at a plain business man like me."

Beryl left her seat and went round to her father's end of the table, she flung her arms around his neck and kissed him; in that caress, the slight shadow which to-night's discourse had seemed to raise between father and daughter melted away for ever.

Mr. Hunter was a shrewd man of business, though he had not proved himself a good judge of character. Having once declined to prosecute John Stuart, he desired that the robbery was not to be mentioned again in his hearing.

"It's no use, Bates," he told his manager, shortly, "your feelings carry you away (very unbusiness like too), and you can't judge things impartially. I've stretched a point to oblige you, and agreed not to prosecute Stuart, I've gone a step further and promised that if he refers anyone to me I'll tell them he was a first-rate servant, and I've no fault to find with him down to the strange loss of the cheque, but I can't go beyond that; to keep reviving the case will only upset you and make me miserable—so just let it drop."

Under these circumstances there was little fear of anyone at the office reminding the chief of the calamity of a fortnight ago, and yet this very day when Mr. Hunter had settled down at his writing table, it was wonderful how the affair haunted him and how difficult he found it to think of anyone or anything except Jack Stuart and his lost cheque.

It was quite true as Beryl had said, the lad's whole future was blighted, it was also true that he had helpless relations dependent on him, and these might suffer privations, nay, bitter want for the lack of those thirty-five shillings the shabby junior clerk had been used to carry home so regularly.

The merchant knew his pretty Beryl was rarely wrong in her estimate of character, and what she had said about Stuart troubled him not a little.

He could not settle to work at all, and finally, pushing aside his papers, he took his hat and went out, resolved to execute his daughter's other behest, and hint to Mr. Kenneth Bertram that he need not come a-wooing to The Firs on the first of September next.

It was just as Mr. Hunter had told Beryl, he had never been invited to Kenneth's chambers, and there was a little natural reluctance in going there, first on such an errand, but he was just in the mood to fly out at someone, and really it would be a relief to his feelings to reproach Kenneth with his want of loyalty in carrying on with a pretty nobody when he was suing for the hand of his heiress cousin.

He found the house easily. It was a big, square, red brick building, newish-looking, and of goodly height. It accommodated one or two clubs and institutions, but the upper floors were suites of bachelor apartments furnished by the tenants themselves, and consisting only of bed-room, sitting-room, and a small den usually devoted to the man servant who valetted the said bachelors, tidied their things, and ordered in their meals.

To Robert Hunter who came of substantial

middle-class ancestry, and who even now in his wealthy days would have despised the assistance of a valet, this mode of living was strange enough but he had come to see Kenneth not to approve a system, so he looked carefully at the list of names painted up by which he ascertained that the third floor was inhabited by his kinsman, this discovery made he mounted the steps rather reluctantly, for he was a stout man and three flights was rather an ordeal, however he arrived at last outside an oak door endorsed "Mr. Bertram," and knocked at it vehemently, not in the least prepared for what was to be revealed in answer to that summons.

## CHAPTER X.

BON DAWSON looked straight into Etta's face, bewilderment, grief and tenderness were all mingled in that one glance. The girl could not fathom if he thought her arrival at that hour a heinous crime, she could not tell if he had been entertained by Aunt Mary's lamentations over her conduct, and she would not ask him. She was quite certain something dreadful was the matter. Never before, in her memory, had the house been astir at such a late hour. Why the gas in the hall was flaring away in the most wasteful manner, and where, oh where was Aunt Mary?

"I am glad you have come, dear," said Bob, gently. "Elizabeth thought you might have gone to church, and forgetting the time, walked back the longest way."

There was a church some two miles from Ashley Green, noted for the beautiful music at its week day services. Elizabeth herself was fond of going over to it now and then. She had thought her sister might have carried her troubles there to-night. Etta decided Bob need not be undeceived yet.

"No one wanted me at home," she said, reprovingly, "and Bob, the house is like a funeral now. I can't bear to stay in it."

"The truth must come out some day and Jack be cleared," replied her lover, "but meanwhile I'm afraid there's a troubled time in store for us all, dear. You must be brave, Etta, and try to bear it, for oh, my little love, I have terrible news for you."

Bob little guessed that Etta lived so far apart from the others—so utterly engrossed with her own personal concerns that no trouble coming to her home could touch her very much.

"What is it, Bob?" she said, rather petulantly. "I'm sure there's something wrong, and you won't mend it by keeping me in suspense."

He put her fractiousness down to grief. He was always making excuses for Etta, just because his great love blinded him to her true character.

"It is your father," said Bob, slowly. "Jack came round for me an hour ago. They were frightened about Mr. Stuart. He was left alone while your aunt and Elizabeth were getting supper. When they came back they found him lying back in his big chair by the window quite unconscious."

"It has been so hot," said Etta, grudgingly. "People often seem faint in close thundery weather like this. I don't suppose there is very much the matter. Aunt Mary and Betty are sure to make a fuss. They always fidget about father if his finger aches."

Bob stifled a sigh. He had insisted on breaking the news to Etta himself. He had expected she would be well-nigh broken-hearted, and he should need all his efforts to console her, and lo, she made light of the illness and needed no consolation.

"It is a very serious attack," said Bob, gravely. "Only a grave shock would cause such a sudden seizure, unless the heart was seriously diseased, and as we know, Mr. Stuart can have had no shock. He was only alone about ten minutes and he never left the parlour."

"Where is he now?" asked Etta, with more feeling than she had shown before. "Where is everybody? The house seems deserted."

"Your aunt was anxious he should be got to bed at once. She said he would be so much

quieter upstairs. Poor Jack was too upset to be of much use, but that lodger of yours—what a nice fellow he seems—helped me to carry Mr. Stuart upstairs, and your aunt got him to bed. He is quite conscious now, but so weak that I have forbidden him to speak at all. Indeed he seems to have no wish to talk. He lies perfectly still, only that now and again he shudders as though at the recollection of some terrible picture."

"Then he will be all right to-morrow!" said Etta.

"I'm afraid he won't be all right for many to-morrows," said Bob, sadly; "he will want the greatest care and the most devoted nursing; he must be fed up with invalid delicacies, and as soon as he is a little better he ought to go away to the seaside."

Etta looked discomfited.

"He would never do that; he has not slept a night away since mother died. And oh, Bob, just think of the expense; there's Jack 'out,' and the school dwindled to nothing; we didn't want a long illness on the top of our other troubles."

"Your aunt is going to sit up to-night," said Bob, "and Elizabeth is busy making something for your father to take. You had better go to bed, dear, or I shall be having you knocked up, too; and you'll need all your strength by and bye."

"Where's Jack?"

"With Betty; she can't bear to leave him alone because he's so out of it, but I must call him now; I'm going to make up some medicine, and I want him to come and fetch it."

They had been talking in the hall, and someone had come downstairs noiselessly and now answered Mr. Dawson's last words.

"If you will let me I can come with you and fetch the medicine; I should not be going to bed in any case just yet."

Etta saw the lodger for the first time then, she recognised nothing, but Lancelot Underwood knew the girl he had seen walking with her lover in the country lanes near Barton. He felt perplexed. This was Etta Stuart, Betty's sister, and the *fiancée* of the grave, earnest young surgeon. Who then was the man on whose arm she had leant so confidently on that summer Sunday at Barton?

They left the house together, the two men whose fate and fortunes were so different. Lancelot Underwood was rich, would probably become even more so, but his faith and trust in womanhood had been wrecked by the falseness of one faithless girl. Bob was poor, and expected to be poor all his life, but the world seemed a glad place to him, just because he had won the promise of the woman he worshipped.

It was not very far from Church-street to the doctor's surgery, but Mr. Underwood walked very slowly.

He had something to tell which he thought the other ought to hear—(not about Etta, that could wait)—and he hardly knew how to introduce the subject. Bob unconsciously helped him.

"I fear you may be put to some few discomforts, Mr. Underwood," he said, gently; "but if you could only put up with them and remain in Church-street it would be more of a charity than you can guess. The Stuarts are so proud, you may have no idea how bad things are with them; but since that misfortune befell poor Jack your payments, and the trifle brought in by the school, are all they have to depend upon."

"I will stay," said Lancelot, with a readiness which won the other's heart: "I am only in England for a few months and I should like to remain at Ashley Green till I return to Africa. I suppose you have known the family a long time?"

"Ever since I was a small boy. I respect Mr. Stuart with my whole heart; and his sister, though 'peculiar,' is as true as steel. It has made me terribly sorry to see them grow poorer and poorer every year. I had hoped when Jack got this berth at Hunter's things would look up, but you see his father's blindness caused fresh expenses, and now the poor boy is out of place, and may be, as far as I can judge, for months."

"If you are such an old friend you must know all their secrets."

"They haven't got any," said Bob, frankly; "there never was a family whose whole life was so free from concealments of any kind."

"Then I'm afraid you won't credit what I have to tell you, but, nevertheless, it is true. As Mr. Stuart's doctor you ought to know it because, in a measure, it explains his sudden illness; but had you not been a close friend as well, I think I should have buried it in silence."

"Pray tell me everything!" pleaded Bob, "I felt positive some shock had brought on the attack, only I know the man's life and story so well it puzzled me to think what shock he could possibly receive."

Lance nodded, and went on,—

"I spend a lot of time at my window, it looks right down Church-street, and I can't help seeing everyone who passes up and down. From the first week of coming here I noticed a woman who seemed fond of walking past here just as it grew dark, and looking intently at the house. I must own I grew curious in time. I have known her spend quite five minutes staring up at these windows, but she never knocked at the door, or tried to gain admittance. If any of the family came out, she turned quickly away and plunged into the little alley higher up."

"What sort of a woman?" asked Robert Dawson.

"I can hardly tell you, I should say she had been a lady, and pretty, too, once, now she is a mere wreck; she must be terribly poor from her appearance, but she does not look to belong to the lowest class. I am quite certain that her one object in haunting Church-street, was to watch the Stuarts' house, and though you will despise me as a romantic idler for saying so, I have woven a great many stories with her for their heroine."

"And you think she was here to-night?"

"I am certain of it, I saw her about five minutes before Mr. Stuart was discovered unconscious, his daughter declares she was not away a quarter of an hour, therefore it seems to me clear, that the woman was staring at the house as usual and Mr. Stuart must have recognised her."

"Mr. Underwood," said Bob gravely, "please don't think I scoff at your theory, but you have forgotten one thing—poor Stuart is blind."

"I know," and Lance seemed in no way discomfited, "that all fits in."

"It can't," returned the surgeon bluntly. "No blind man could recognise anyone by seeing them."

"I think," said Lancelot, slowly, "this woman wanted to see Mr. Stuart and no one else, I have myself watched her cautiously avoid all meetings with the younger portion of the family. Women don't haunt one particular house without some object, especially when time means bread to them as it must to that poor soul. I think she wanted to see Mr. Stuart alone. She had something to tell him, perhaps, and she could not write, since a blind man's letters are read by others. You know as well as I do, the loving care which surrounds poor Stuart; his daughter and his sister are devoted to him, and he is hardly ever left alone. It might well take this strange woman weeks of patient waiting before she accomplished her purpose."

To-night he was alone by the open window, she must have seen him and called him by name. We all know that people are known by their voice, when their faces are altered far beyond the chance of recognition. I maintain that the sound of her voice told Mr. Stuart her identity, and that the shock was so terrible he collapsed."

They had reached the surgery now, Bob invited Mr. Underwood in and closed the door on them both, for a few moments neither spoke.

"You may be right," said Bob hoarsely, "but granting this, who can the woman be? The Stuarts have not a poor relation in the world. There was a cousin drowned on his way to Africa and a younger sister who married very well in France, and died quite young, but of living relations, rich or poor, I should say the family were destitute."

"Do you remember Mrs. Stuart?"

"No; she died when Etta was born."

"At home?"

"No," replied Bob, marvelling at the drift of the questions, "they were not so poor then, and

they had gone away for a little holiday. She was taken ill prematurely and died at Etta's birth away from home."

"You are sure she died?"

"Why, of course I am," said Bob, in an aggrieved tone. "Don't Miss Stuart and Elizabeth speak of her as though she were an angel in Paradise, and haven't father, aunt and brother treated my little girl Etta harshly because she cost her mother's life?"

"Then my theory won't stand," said Lancelot. "I thought Mrs. Stuart was alive, that she and her husband had quarrelled and parted, and she had come back after all these years to try and make it up."

"No," said Bob, "that won't do; romances of that sort don't happen in the middle-class, Mr. Underwood. The woman you saw may have some connection with my poor friends, her sudden appearance may have caused poor Stuart's illness, but she is not his wife."

Lancelot turned sharply round with one question—

"Then who on earth is she?"

(To be continued.)

## TWO MARRIAGES.

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### CHAPTER IV.—(continued.)

"I HAVE done worse than that, Grace. 'Oh!' seizing her hand, 'promise me, on your honour, to keep my secret. He would be so angry if he thought I told; but I must—must speak to some one, and who is so fitting as his own sister?"

"Then, for goodness sake, speak out, and don't keep me on tenter-hooks any longer, child. What is it—what is this wonderful secret?"

"I—I—oh, how can I tell you, I—" making a great effort, and looking up into Grace's face, which expressed nothing more than half amused toleration.

An exchange of kisses and looks of hair was the farthest her imagination could carry that young lady.

"I—I—am married to your brother Peter!"

Clang down fell the poker, and Miss Grey sprang from her chair as if she had been shot, now by far the most moved of the two.

She leant her arm against the mantelpiece to steady herself for some seconds.

As she turned and looked back at the girl, still kneeling on the floor, her throat was working; she could not speak for some seconds, and then she said,—

"You are not in earnest, Georgie! Oh, say you are not in earnest!" And to herself, "He could not—oh, he dared not!"

"I am, indeed, in earnest," said the other, rising, and now speaking with some self-control. "We were married at the registry office the day he sailed. We did it so that we should always be bound to one another, and could never drift apart."

"You foolish girl, you mad girl! And you believe in Peter!" exclaimed Grace, in a horrid voice.

"I do most sincerely, and I will not hear a word said against him! Only, Grace, do, do try and find out where he is—if he is well or ill! I will go on my knees to you for one word—only one!"

"He never writes unless he wants something," said Grace, sharply, "and never to me. What was his object?" she muttered, half to herself. "What, what could it have been? Not beauty, then—not money. For once Peter has puzzled me; and, oh, of all his wicked deeds none were so inexcusable as this! What motive can he have for spoiling her life?"

Outwardly his sister was silent. She looked as if she had received a great shock.

She stared helplessly at Georgie—now her sister-in-law—as if she were seeking to find the answer to the question in her face—Why had he done it?



Georgie was a raw, thin, shy-looking girl, a year and a-half ago.

Her looks could not have been the attraction. She was much improved since then. It was simply a wanton deed of wickedness to tie this girl to him for life, and then abandon her, as it were, for sport.

"You must take your mother into your confidence, Georgie," she said, impressively. "I wonder you did not do so long ago. She should have been the first to hear of this."

"I would have done so, but he expressly forbid me. I dare not; and you are his sister. He would not be so angry about your being told as anyone else."

"Angry!" "Dare!"

This was a curious way of alluding to the absent one, seeing that he was supposed to be still her lover; but Peter ruled with an iron hand, and as much by fear as love.

"Be advised by me, and tell your mother this very night, before you go to sleep," said Grace, with unusual solemnity. "She and I will keep your secret for you, you poor deluded Georgie. Although I say it, my own brother," she added, quickly resuming her hat and fur-lined cloak, and waving away her companion with an abrupt farewell—as abruptly took her departure, leaving Georgie sitting at the fire alone.

Georgie acted on her advice at once. Now that the ice had once been broken it seemed easier to speak, and she very gently led her mother round to the subject of Peter Blaine.

Mrs. Grey—dear, unsophisticated woman!—had a high opinion of this very attentive and gentlemanly young man, and praised him, and spoke of him in a far warmer manner than his own sister.

Here her praises had died away from her lips Georgie had mustered up courage.

"Would you be very angry and very much shocked, mother!" taking her hand as she spoke. "Indeed, indeed, I am afraid you will; but I could not help it. He would not let me speak. Before Peter went away that February day eighteen months ago I walked into Portsmouth, and married him at the registry office."

Mrs. Grey fairly gasped, and no wonder! She was so stunned by this startling communication that she could not speak until she had her lips moistened by a glass of old port wine, and then all she said was,—

"Oh, Georgie, Georgie!"

"Be angry with me as much as you please, mother; I deserve it. I know I am older and wiser now; and, much as I love Peter, you ought to have been told first."

"And why was I not? Why this long secrecy!"

"Peter said you would not hear of my marrying a poor man like him, or even being engaged. He is so firm and so resolute in his own opinion that he will listen to no other; and, to keep me true to him until he came back with a fortune and claimed me, he said it was best to go through the form of a secret marriage; but, oh! mother, mother, I have not heard from him for a year, and I fear that he is dead!" now breaking down and sobbing bitterly.

"If he were, surely Mr. Blaine would know, dear. Ill news always travels fast. He may be in the wilds, his letters stolen or lost. After all, Georgie, though you might have trusted me, I am not so angry as I ought to be, or as your aunt Vance would be were you her daughter. I am not going to be with you long. Charlotte is at the other end of the world. You need a protector. You would be truly alone, poor child! and though I cannot understand his doubts of my consent—for surely he has something—I will die easier in my mind knowing you to be the wife of such a steady, worthy young man (as far as I know) as Peter Blaine."

#### CHAPTER V.

VERY soon after this a letter did come from America. In Mr. Blaine's own neat handwriting, but it was scarcely one that Georgie cared to lay before her mother or his sister.

It was an imperative demand for money—money at once, money at any price.

Poor Georgie! Her cheeks burned as she read this long-looked-for epistle, and she was extremely angry with herself for feeling that her idol was not made of pure gold after all!

She told her mother and Grace that he was in New Orleans, well, but not doing well.

"You need hardly add that," exclaimed his sister, sharply. "Poor Georgie, you will get to know Peter by-and-by. You need not make excuses for him to me. The best thing he can do, as far as you are concerned, is to stay away always."

Here ensued an angry argument, Georgie stoutly defending her lord and master, and Grace as stoutly attacking her too-well known relative, though her charges were vague.

She did not, dared not, tell this girl before her what manner of man she had so blindly married.

Encouraged by the success of his appeal, the shameless Peter (who had swallowed up all his wife's hoardings and her yearly allowance for dress) wrote again and again for money.

His cry was like that of the daughter of the horse-leech,—

"Give, give!"

His begging letters were masterpieces, and he always implied, in the midst of his most clamorous demands, that he was conferring a great favour upon her in permitting her to supply his wants.

Where to obtain this money Georgie knew not. She was positively at her wit's end, and Peter must have thirty pounds, for Peter was ill.

So he said, but in truth his illness was a fable, and he was trying his luck at eucbre and poker at the low gambling places in New Orleans.

This was his profession. Since he had left England he had never attempted anything else.

At one time his luck was "dead in" and he spent his money lavishly on himself. At others he was living hand to mouth, and almost destitute.

He swayed backwards and forwards between money and no money with the regularity of a pendulum.

What would the trusting Georgie have said could she have seen him as she despatched the price of her watch and all her humble little ornaments across the Atlantic—to have had the gift of following that letter with her eye and seen it hastily torn open, cast aside unread, with a curse at the scantiness of its enclosure—to have seen her adored Peter seated at a table thronged with the very dregs of society, a beard on his face, a Panama hat on his head, a revolver in his hand, and a heap of gold and dirty paper money piled before him, gambling and drinking "the happy hours away!"

Oh! how he mentally smacked his lips as he thought of that big sum that would be his own some day, and some day soon—for Annie gave her brother very encouraging accounts of the failing health of old George Harvey—he could not possibly last much longer; in Mr. Blaine's opinion he had far outstayed his allotted time as it was.

Alas! for Mr. Blaine's hopes—for Mrs. Grey's modest expectations of a small remembrance for Georgie, who would be so badly off in the coming by-and-by.

Although Mr. Harvey died—and died suddenly falling downstairs and breaking his aged neck—no will was to be found!

Mr. Bint had made one, and given it over to the old gentleman, who refused to trust it into any hands but his own—where had he put it!

Echo answered where!

Every nook and corner of the house was searched—Halliday foremost in the quest—but no last testament could be discovered.

Think of the blow that this was to the scheming Mrs. Bint, who knew that her brother would now lay the blame of all his misfortunes at her doors—think of Peter's feelings when he received the terrible tidings of no will, and that Mrs. Vance had most cheerfully succeeded to the estate as elder sister and heir-at-law!

So he had had all that business for nothing!

He wrote one more arbitrary appeal for money

to his partner, who had to have recourse to her mother, with many blushes and tears; and having succeeded in getting his demands supplied, he said to himself, as he cashed his last remittance,—

"I think I have about got all she has to give, and squeezed out every shilling, and now I'll cut her and the entire concern"—and he did.

For a whole year there were no tidings of him. At the end of that time Mrs. Grey, who had long been holding on in life just by a mere thread, died, leaving her daughter almost alone in the world, for the Greys were poor, proud, and reserved, especially since Charlotte (the sociable) had married; and, beyond the Blaines, had but few friends.

Mrs. Grey, with almost her last breath, commended Georgie to Grace, saying,—

"She is, as you know, your brother's wife; write to him and tell him to come home and take care of her; he need not be afraid of me now."

Grace nodded, and pressed the poor lady's hand reassuringly, and promised that whatever happened she would always be a sister to Georgie, and that she would never want for a friend as long as she lived; but she made no allusion to the absent Peter.

After the funeral Georgie was taken home by the Blaines, who were very good to her.

The furniture at the villa was sold by auction—the widow's little fortune arranged so that it came to Georgie—and all her affairs were wound up by Captain Blaine, who rather enjoyed financial business.

Georgie had hardly forty pounds a year—for part of her mother's income had lapsed at her death, and she talked of going out as a companion, if she could find any suitable situation with some nice invalid elderly lady.

The Blaines were much against this, and would have offered her a home, but they expected her aunt, the wealthy Mrs. Vance, to come forward and claim her niece; however, so far, beyond a letter of condolence, she had made no sign.

Georgie's mourning was still too recent for her to go anywhere or to see anyone, when another blow fell upon her.

She came downstairs one morning to breakfast, and ere she had passed the threshold of the dining-room door she was aware something had happened.

Mrs. Blaine lay upon the sofa in a faint—Capt. Blaine was walking the room, *à la* quarter deck, in a very perturbed state of mind holding a letter behind his back—and Grace and a maid were trying to recover Mrs. Blaine. The breakfast was untouched—what had happened!

"Don't come in Georgie!" cried Grace, with a gesture of dismissal. "Go into the drawing-room; I'll be with you in five minutes."

Thus imperatively sent away, Georgie did as she was told and went obediently, and waited in the next room.

She had not much time for speculation for in less than the allotted five minutes Grace entered quickly, closed the door, walked up to her, and laid her hands on her shoulders and said,—

"It was best to tell you alone. Prepare for a shock—I bring you bad news."

"It is Peter!" gasped his wife, suddenly, sitting down and becoming very white, and shaking all over.

"Yes, it is Peter. Papa has been making inquiries about him. A letter came from his agents this morning."

"Is he dead?" inquired Georgie, in a low, horrified whisper.

"Yes," replied his sister, averting her eyes.

"Go on—go on; tell me all," adjured the other, excitedly. "Get it over quickly."

"There is no more—he was killed in a steamboat explosion nearly two months ago."

"Is—it is sure to be true?"

"Quite sure; there is no room for a doubt."

Strange to say, Georgie was not crying yet—her face was very rigid and very white—the blow was so sudden. She could not realise it all at once.

Her companion stared at her in some surprise and then said—

"No one need ever know now, Georgie, about you and he. Don't think me a wretch for speaking of it now, but I implore you, in the most

urgent manner, to keep the secret from everyone. I have a reason for this."

"I do not believe that he is dead," said Georgie, rising, and not noticing the request, "something tells me that he is alive."

"It is but too true," said Grace; "do not delude yourself with false hopes. Stay, you shall see the letter!"

In another moment she had hurried out of the room, and returned with it in her hand."

It was apparently from a firm of lawyers in St. Louis, and ran as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to send you the painful intelligence that Mr. P. Blaine is no more. We, acting on instructions from your New York agents, succeeded in tracing him to New Orleans, to Little Rock, and other places. Within the last week he was one of the passengers on board the river steamer *Express*, which had a terrible accident, from over-pressure on the boilers, and more than forty passengers were killed. Mr. Blaine went on board—that has been sworn to—but he is not among the survivors. His luggage lies unclaimed. We shall forward it, if desired, on receipt of your favour. The barman of the *Express* who lies in hospital badly scalded, has informed the interviewer that a gentleman, exactly answering to the description of Mr. P. Blaine, was the last passenger to whom he handed a gin-cocktail, and that he was so close to the boilers that he could not possibly escape.

"Permit me, dear sir, to conclude with sympathy and respect.—I remain, your obedient servant,

"ZACHARY B. SHARR."

This was conclusive even to Georgie, who was compelled to accept the situation, and was, as Mrs. Blaine remarked, "the most sympathetic girl she had ever met. She was really quite like one of themselves—she felt it so much for poor Peter."

Often it had been on the tip of Georgie's tongue to confide in his mother that she was poor Peter's widow but a solemn promise to Grace withheld her.

She was already in deep mourning, so she could not add that tribute to his memory; but she spent many hours alone in her own room, dissolved in tears over his photograph and brand-new, never-worn wedding ring.

## CHAPTER VI.

GEORGIE'S woe-begone appearance was all very well for a month or six weeks, but when time went on, and she still presented to the world a visage that looked as if it never would, could, or should smile again, Grace was out of all patience.

She did not know that what was secretly preying on her friend's mind was this—a sense of shame, of surprise, at herself, that she was not half as sorry as she ought to have been.

The late Peter's blunt, almost brutal letters had been a shock to his bride. There had been gradually an unavowed sense of something wanting stealing over her mental view of Mr. Bland, and a violent, almost agonised, struggle to keep fast hold of her reverence for him; but, somehow, almost imperceptibly, it had slid away.

She tried to conjure up her first impressions, but they would not come; those fierce curt letters, those long silences of utter indifference had done their part.

All the same, when Grace remonstrated with her for such apparently inconceivable grief—grief which time had done nothing to assuage—she became warm, nay, angry, in her own self-defence, and in doing valiant battle in the cause of Peter and his perfections.

"Georgie, I have no patience with you," said her friend at last. "Would you let the memory of him throw a cloud over all your life—you, who are only nineteen, with your best years before you! If you knew him you would not squander your time and your tears. If you had really known him you would never have married him, and why he married you I cannot understand."

"He married me because—because he loved me," returned Georgie, boldly, "for nothing else."

Her companion surveyed her for some moments in silence, and then said,—

"He never loved but one woman, and she was not you. He made love to scores, but the only one he ever really cared for was Mary Todd, a housemaid we had years ago—a very, very pretty girl. She was sent away when it was found out, and Peter was distracted. Yes, in his way, such as it was, he cared for Mary Todd, and for no one since."

"Grace, how dare you speak in this way of your brother!" stammered the young widow. "It is shameful, unnatural, wicked!"

"I never cared for Peter," replied Grace, calmly, "and I am very fond of you, and I don't like to see you fretting for a will-o'-the-wisp, and going about with white cheeks and hollow eyes for the sake of one, who—; but never mind, I will say no more, I will leave it all to time. The only thing I ask of you is to give me your solemn promise, swear it to me, that to living soul you will never repeat that you listened to Peter and went through that form at the registry-office. I have a good reason for this. Here, give your promise on this, Georgie," holding out a small Testament as she spoke, "then I shall feel safe—then I shall feel as if the past was really buried."

"I do not see what wonderful interest you have in the matter. Grace—you who speak so harshly of your poor brother," objected Georgie. "What is it to you?"

"It is for your own sake I am asking for this promise, and some day you will understand that I have been wise. You are too young, and impetuous, and imprudent to understand it now; if your mother knew what was in my mind she would say the same. She would urge you to everlasting silence on this one subject," still holding out the book; and her friend, overawed by the solemnity of her manner and her persistent insistence, accepted it, kissed it, and gave the required promise, that would tie her tongue for evermore.

Peter's effects arrived in due time; they seemed a tangible proof that he was really dead. Very odd things were discovered in his travelling-bag and portmanteau—cards, dice, promissory notes, betting-books, and other volumes belonging to the very worst grade of literature.

These things were not kept from Georgie; she saw them all. She saw sweet little notes in female handwriting alluding to meetings, and jaunts, and presents—presents bestowed on these strangers, perhaps with the very money he had wrung from her.

These letters went a long way towards curing Georgie of her fits of remorseful abstraction, and by-and-by she was sufficiently cheerful to pay a visit to Hillford to her wealthy relations, who had sent her more than one urgent invitation, pleasantly, but cautiously, worded, not committing themselves to offering her a permanent home, only speaking of a long stay.

The Vances had soared far above a neat detached residence standing in its own grounds of half-an-acre (vide the advertisements), and had taken up their abode in a handsome mansion of the Queen Anne period, about a mile from the town. There they kept a great deal of company, entertaining the county and the nearest military, and had a retinue of servants, and not one, but three or four carriages.

Mr. Vance was a timid little gentleman, with a bald head, and did his best to stay in the background, with his paper, his pipe, and his prize tulips. They were his only extravagance, and Mrs. Vance and her daughters were now great people of fashion, and these plain (and we cannot add young) ladies had each an admirer—whether of themselves or their substantial fortunes we need not linger to inquire.

Georgie's rôle had been already arranged by them. It was to be that of the "poor relation"—not an agreeable part at any time, and specially galling to Georgie, who was both proud and shy. She had not seen her aunt and cousins for more than three years, and during that time she had shot up from a thin, angular, unfashioned child of sixteen into a very elegant looking, tall, and

strikingly pretty girl of nineteen. She arrived at Hillford station one wet May afternoon, and looked out in vain on the platform for a familiar face—none such to be seen? She descended, secured her luggage and looked round more leisurely. No one accosted her; no one has wanted her. Then the train went on, and she was left a lonely figure, standing beside her belongings on the platform. This was certainly a very chill kind of welcome.

Just as she was about to charter a fly a man in livery came up to her, streaming with rain—it was now pouring—and said, as he touched his hat,—

"Are you Miss Grey, please?"

"Yes," she assented, most gladly.

"I'm come from Bosworth Hall for you—Mrs. Vance's. I've got the pony Croydon outside. Your luggage will fit all right," and it did; and in a few minutes they had started in sheets of rain, in this little open trap, and were rapidly trotting out of the town, and not long in reaching their destination, through a pair of great gates up an avenue bordered with dripping laurels, to the hall door of a big old red house. The hall door was thrown open by a smart footman, and Georgie entered, but there was no one to greet her even here.

"Please, miss, will you walk into the drawing-room," said the servant, "and I'll tell Mrs. Vance."

The drawing-room—a big, cold-looking room, newly decorated with white and grey—was also empty; and Georgie, who was tired and hungry and wet, felt, as she sat waiting for someone to welcome her, ready to burst into tears, and a foolish desire to go back by the next available train to her kind hospitable friends, the Blaizes. Very different was their treatment to this.

Presently the door opened, and Mr. Vance hobbled in, newspaper in hand and spectacles on nose.

"Well, Georgie," he exclaimed in a chirruping kind of voice, "so you have come, eh? What, got wet, I'm afraid! Your aunt and cousins have gone to an afternoon tea, and took the closed carriage, or they'd have been here to meet you. They said you would not mind, and sent Jones and the Croydon. Eh?—what?"

Georgie made no reply. What could she say?

"I suppose you would like tea and to see your room, eh? Dear me, you are greatly grown—eh—what?" as she stood up, "quite—quite a fine-looking young woman," casting a mental glance at his own ill-favoured daughters. "Here, Johnson," to a maid who had approached, "take Miss Grey upstairs; get her tea, show her her room, and look after her. Your aunt," turning to Georgie, "will be home about seven. You'd, perhaps, better be down by then. Eh—what?"

This was an inversion of the laws of etiquette with a vengeance. She was to receive and welcome her relations, not they her. So saying he hobbled away to his own study.

The room selected for Georgie was at the top of the house—up three flights of stairs. It was not luxurious, and by no means one of the grand guest-chambers; but it was comfortable, and she felt more at home when she had unpacked some of her luggage, changed her dress, and partaken of some very refreshing tea, and an accompanying plate of buttered toast. She was ready now to face her relations when they arrived; but their unceremonious treatment of her filled her with some misgiving.

She tried to think as well of them as she could; she remembered that Lizzie and Jane were a good deal older than she was. They had always treated her quite as a child, and made her run their errands and messages, lectured her, patronised her, even after she had gone into long dresses. They still called her "that child." What would they say to her now? How would they treat her? Certainly no longer as a little girl in the schoolroom. Probably they had all forgotten that she was now quite grown up, and this was the reason that they had not thought it necessary to make any fuss about her.

As the clock on the mantelpiece neared seven she began to think it was time to go downstairs. She rose and looked at herself in the glass. She had on a very plain, well-made black dress,



and looked imposingly tall in the long mirror that gave back her reflection.

She wondered what her relations would say to her; and as she was looing to get the meeting over she went slowly downstairs.

Just as she reached the inner hall there was a great fuss in the outer one, several female voices talking at once, and the loudest saying,—

"Oh! she has come, has she!"

Then the swing door was thrown back, and she was face to face with a tall lady with a beaky nose, and two splendidly-dressed smaller ones—her aunt and cousins. And they were confronted, not by what they expected in the least—a rather countrified, gawky, commonplace girl—but a very tall, very pretty young lady in mourning, who must be their cousin Georgie; and who, as she advanced to meet them, gave them almost the idea of receiving them in their own house.

This was no girl to be patronised or snubbed, and certainly no girl to bring among their own circle of admirers.

Very voluble were their excuses, and they made up for their social slackness previously, by overpowering familiarity in the present.

They brought Georgie into the morning-room, and all then sat down and inspected her as she stood under the gaslight.

"How you have grown, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Vance, unfastening her mantle as she spoke. "Out of all recollection, I declare!"

"Yes, she is not the least the style of girl she promised to be," chimed in Lizzie, with a dubious tone of voice.

"And her hair being tied up makes a difference," added Jane.

"Well," remarked Georgie, now taking a seat, "you all look much the same as when I saw you last—only older (meaning no offence)"—resolved not to sit by dumb, as if she was some piece of furniture they were discussing.

"Three years can't make any difference in looks at our age! To listen to you one would imagine we were old women!" said Lizzie, sharply; adding, "you are still in deep crepe, I see. Who made your dress? Jay!"

"No; it was made at Southsea."

"It's a capital cut—is it not Lizzie?" appealing to her sister.

"Well, my dear," interrupted her aunt, "that was a sad business about your poor mother. But she was always an invalid. I never expected she would have held out so long. And Charlotte is married. Great changes. And we have had our changes too," now looking round the luxurious apartment complacently. "We are quite in the county set. Your Uncle George's money came to me, you know!"

"Yes; I know," assented Georgie, quietly.

"So strange that he made no will. There was some cock-and-bull story going about, set rolling by the Bints, that he had made a will, and left all his fortune to you—of all people! Did you ever hear of such an absurd idea in all your life? I laughed till I cried when they told me."

Georgie muttered indistinctly that it was an absurd idea, and then Jane burst out,—

"Did you hear that he was found at the bottom of the stairs with a broken neck. Fancy his dying in that way! They say, of course, the house is haunted. No one will take it, and so it's given up to the rats."

"What has become of Halliday?" said Georgie.

"Oh! Halliday was fearfully cut up about the will. She expected a fine legacy; and she hunted the whole house most carefully from garret to cellar, turned out every nook and cranny, all in vain. However, she must have feathered her nest pretty well, all the same, for she has married a man young enough to be her son, who, of course married her for her money; and she has money, for she has taken the lease of the 'Plough and Harrow' public-house, and stocked it and furnished it, and does a fine trade."

"And is one of her own best customers, if tales be true," remarked Jane, with a spiteful laugh. "They say she drinks like a fish."

"Well, girls, there's the first gong; we must go and dress," said Mrs. Vance, rising. "You know your way to the drawing-room, Georgina. You see, we do not make any stranger of you, and we shall expect you to make yourself quite

at home—blood is thicker than water," patting her on the arm.

All the same, as the two Misses Vance were dressing they frankly compared notes, and came to the conclusion that Georgie Grey was not the least like what they expected, and they were rather sorry that she had been asked to Bosworth Hall.

Time went on, and Georgie shook down into a certain groove in the family circle.

She did not go "out" with her aunt and cousins, as the former, under pressure from her daughters, declared that her mother being dead only seven months such a proceeding was not to be thought of, even in the mildest form; and when more than one or two people dined at Mrs. Vance's Georgie partook of that meal alone in the retirement of the schoolroom.

People who saw her were rather astonished to find that commonplace Mrs. Vance possessed such an elegant, distinguished-looking relative—these were the county folk.

In the town of Hillford she saw many familiar faces, and received for her own and her mother's sake a hearty welcome in an humbler sphere.

One day she actually met Halliday, in the street when she was alone—Halliday, who was not drunk. Oh! dear, no, but loquacious and outspoken. She paused exactly in front of her, and said,—

"Well, unless I'm blind, 'tis Mrs. Grey's youngest!"

"Yes; and you are Halliday, Uncle Grey's housekeeper," returned the young lady, promptly.

"Poor old man, he had a sad end!"

"He had; but 'twas an easy death," and lowering her voice and glancing into Georgie's rather-startled face. "Believe me, as I stand here, that will will be found, and someone as I could mention will be righted yet; and those as is flaunting about in peacock's feathers, has no right to them, will find their level. You mark my words," and with a sudden change of tone, as if sorry she had let herself say so much, she added, "well, I'm glad to see you. You're a lady, whatever other people may be. Good morning to you, miss;" and with a nod of her head she passed on, walking, perhaps, not quite as straight or as steady as she would have wished had she seen herself as others saw her.

I have wandered from the point in enlarging on Halliday and her little weakness, and that point was Georgie's position in her aunt's household.

She was not exactly an humble retainer, and yet she was not an honoured guest. She had no wish for fine society, for balls, for dinner-parties; but she could see that even if she had it would have been all the same.

She was to stay in the background when visitors called. She was never summoned when these visits were returned; she was left at home. She was sent all the messages, as of yore—all the errands into Hillford; and when alone with aunt and cousins they were more than amiable, they were positively, gushing; and it was "Georgie, dear," this, and "Georgie, my love," that.

Georgie made bouquets—arranged flowers. Georgie—oh, joy! was very clever with her needle.

She could put a hat or bonnet together like magic; could make a bow or trim a dress with a taste and readiness that surprised her delightful relations, and that quite superseded their forty-guinea maid. Besides this she played very well, and had a good voice, and "coached" them up in the little ditties they sang when they were at parties; patiently going over and over the same bars again. In short, as a lady-companion, superior class of maid, she was a treasure.

She answered notes; she received confidences; she advised about dress, and this was all very well for the present. But how would it be in the coming by-and-by, when she went out too, and appeared as a rival in the matrimonial market! It would not be so pleasant at all; already she had been "noticed."

She had been seen in church and elsewhere, and people had begun to make eager inquiries about "their pretty cousin, Miss Grey"—notably, Lizzie's own and only admirer, although Lizzie had impressed upon him that they had her with

them out of charity; that she was absolutely without a penny. Still he was interested—odious, fickle man!

It was ungrateful of Lizzie and untruthful, too, to speak of her relations in these terms, for Georgie had, as we know, forty pounds of her own per annum, and she was worth nearly as much more to her cousins as a kind of white slave; for what she had once begun to undertake out of pure good nature, they now looked for as a matter of course and an absolute right, and actually grudged any time she might spend on her own gratification—reading, practising, or taking a country walk.

Mrs. Vance saw this. She was not quite so grasping and hard as her daughters, and Georgie was her sister's child. Sometimes she playfully remarked,—

"Girls, you really must not put upon Georgie. She is too good-natured; that's the second dress she has taken to pieces and altered this week."

This was her only remonstrance, as Georgie bent over her work with aching back and tired eyes, and Lizzie would reply with easy serenity,—

"Oh! Georgie does not go out herself. She has great taste and nothing to do, and she likes it. Don't you, dear!"

Then Georgie would mutter something incoherent, and Jane would add,—

"It's much pleasanter for Georgie to be here with us—her own people—one of the family, than if she was earning her own bread out in the world as governess or companion; and after all, sewing is easy!"

Sometimes Georgie thought that after all she would prefer to be a governess or companion; she could not be harder worked, and she would be quite independent. Her mind hovered round this idea for some time, and at last came to a resolute conclusion, to which she was helped by accidentally overhearing the following conversation between her amiable cousins.

She was sitting at her open window sewing, one broiling afternoon, about four o'clock. Their bower was just beneath, and they were apparently sitting at the window discussing some one. It never dawned upon her at first that it could be her, and she listened quite unintentionally.

"I wish she was gone; she will give us trouble yet," said Jane; "she has been here six months now—nearly seven."

"Yes!" acquiesced her sister, "and mother declares that next month she must begin to take her out." (Georgie pricked up her ears; then they were not talking of a servant.) "People, she says, are already beginning to notice, and ask, and wonder when our pretty cousin is going to make her appearance in society."

"And when she does," interrupted her companion, "you and I may retire. She is pretty, there's no denying it, though I don't admire the style, and young; and men are such geese, so easily attracted by a young and pretty face, instead of solid worth and money" (meaning herself). "You know, frankly between ourselves, you and I will never see thirty again."

"You need not remind me of that," quoth the other, sharply, "though I consider that at thirty-five a woman, like a man, is in her prime. The thing is, how are we to get rid of her? What a nuisance she will be taking out. There will be her clothes, her seat in the carriage; four is an awful crush, and four women are too many anywhere, and it can scarcely be expected that one of us should stop at home."

"Scarcely, indeed!" snapped her sister; "I won't for one."

"She is all very well now, and useful, but once she is brought out in society and placed on the same footing as ourselves it will be simply intolerable. I won't stand it, and I shall tell mother so; she has been here six months as it is, quite a long enough visit. Why should she not go back to those friends of hers, the Blaines? I shall throw out a few hints in that direction, you see if I don't," impressively.

But no hints would be needed. The unwelcome cousin, who was busy stitching for that very lady's benefit, had already heard, with crimson face and throbbing heart, she was not wanted—no other hint would be necessary. She would

go, and as soon as possible, but to where? Why should she return to the Blaines, upon whom she had no claim? What on earth was she to do? She rested her burning head on her hands and asked herself that question, and assured herself that wherever she went, or whatever became of her, she would not remain here.

## CHAPTER VII.

GEORGIE sat with her head buried in her hands for some minutes; a host of strange emotions were sweeping through her mind—shame, anger, proud resolve in the fore. Whatever happened she would leave her aunt's house, and that soon; but where was she to go? She jumped up and began to pace the room from end to end, trying to come to some certain conclusion, some fixed idea, that would give her a sufficient sense of independence to go downstairs and sit opposite the cousins at dinner, and pretend to be on the same terms with them as before. She could not live alone on forty pounds a year; she would not thrust herself again on the hospitality of the Blaines. Her sister had vaguely talked of her joining her some day in Australia, but the scheme had never progressed beyond mere "talk."

What was she to do?—go out as governess? No. As companion, secretary, amanuensis, reader—any of these situations would be more to her mind. She would look out in the papers now, and if she saw anything likely to suit she would write and offer herself; and when the bargain was closed, and not till then, she would take her relations into her confidence, and tell them that she was going to relieve them of her company.

Having made up her mind to this programme she proceeded to get ready for dinner, and made her appearance among the family circle with well-assumed composure; but if anyone had noticed her particularly, they would have discovered that she ate very little and spoke less; in fact, when she looked over at her two cousins, and thought of their recent discussion under her window, and of how she had always tried to please them in every way, and had worked so hard at their "odd jobs," as they called them, meaning various tasks at millinery, dressmaking, &c., she felt her feelings so sorely wounded, her self-esteem so immensely lowered, that she was quite ready to burst into tears at a moment's notice. Luckily she restrained herself, and such was her self-command that all that was noticed about her was that she was unusually quiet.

In this condition of "unusual quietness" she stayed for a whole month, eagerly scanning the daily papers for any advertisement likely to suit her. She answered one or two most promising specimens, but was always forestalled, and her hopes were running down to zero, when one happy morning she lit upon the following:—

"Wanted, by an elderly lady, a cheerful young lady as companion; must be musical, well bred, lively, a good reader, and not under twenty years of age.—Apply to M. M., office of this paper."

Georgie was not very "cheerful" at present, certainly, and she wanted three months of twenty. Still she had an idea that she might suit; and eager to be early in the field she sat down at that very moment (though it was before breakfast), wrote a note to "M. M."; and telling the footman to tell her aunt she had gone for a walk and would be back before breakfast was over, hurried off into Hillford, and had the satisfaction of posting her letter in time for an early delivery in London; and two days afterwards she had the still greater satisfaction of receiving a note to say that a personal interview was requested, naming a day and hour, and the rendezvous in a fashionable house in a fashionable square.

How was this to be managed? Hillford was only an hour from town. Mrs. and the Misses Vance often ran up for the day—why should not she make the excuse of some shopping, and do ditto?

Lizzie Vance, ever ready for a "day in town," volunteered, nay, more, pressed her escort, which had perforce to be accepted, and Georgie's only hope was that she might manage to evade her

cousin once she was in London, and this she contrived quite easily.

"I cannot lose my time nor you yours, shopping together. We can meet at the station," said Lizzie. "I advise you to lunch at the Army and Navy Stores. I," impressively, am going to lunch with friends. "Good-bye—don't be late, and don't lose yourself." So saying, the amiable Lizzie stepped into a hansom, waved her hand, and drove off.

Georgie felt decidedly nervous as she tripped up a magnificent staircase after a tall footman, and was asked into an immense drawing-room with blue satin hangings and vast mirrors. She felt lost as she stood alone in this imposing apartment, that actually seemed to swallow up her very identity. She had not yet found courage to be seated when a low voice behind her said,—

"Miss Grey, I presume," and turning she beheld a girl of about six-and-twenty, with cold, scrutinising eyes and sharply chiselled features surveying her critically, and she had been expecting a nice old person with white curls and a cap.

"Won't you sit down?" motioning her towards a sofa with a gesture such as a sultan would use to a slave.

Georgie accepted her invitation in silence.

"You have come about the situation of companion to my aunt, Lady Maxwell."

"I had not heard the lady's name."

"She has taken a fancy to your letter; old ladies are such oddities," contemptuously, "and wished me to see you and ask you more particulars."

"Yes!" assented Georgie, feeling that if her aunt was like the niece she would conceive a violent aversion for the old lady. How this girl did stare!

"Of course your connections are perfectly respectable?"

"Yes! Perfectly so," becoming red with anger.

"You can give references?"

"Yes!"

"Have you ever been in a situation?"

"Never."

"How old are you?"

"Not quite twenty."

"Indeed! Well, you look more. Would you mind playing something?" rising and walking towards a magnificent grand piano. "You see I have to report to aunt."

Georgie felt very nervous as she took off her gloves, but it must be done. Better have to undergo this little ordeal once in a way, than that of living on as an unwelcome guest. Her hands trembled as she struck the first chords, and she certainly did not play in her best manner a short piece of Schumann's.

"I daresay your playing will do," answered the young lady; "aunt is not very particular."

This was said in a manner that made Georgie feel as if her companion had just given her a smart box on the ear; and she became scarlet as she fumbled with her gloves and rose from the instrument.

"Now I must ask you to read to me—half a page will do."

This was another trial, especially as Georgie was so mortified and so nervous. She was afraid she would not be able to command her voice, and there was something so very aggressive in the look, tone, and manner of Lady Maxwell's niece that Georgie's temper was decidedly ruffled. However, she said to herself, it will soon be over; and aloud, "What do you wish me to read?"

"Oh! a bit of anything; here, a page of this," opening a small book that lay on the table; "it's not the matter that signifies, it's the manner."

Georgie took the book, feeling that it would be a delicious luxury to throw it in this young lady's face, and read half a page standing, the other standing opposite and devouring her with her eyes—a maddening sensation to Georgie, who could not read and at the same time return this insolent inspection.

(To be continued.)

OFFICERS in the Navy were distinguished by no particular dress from those in the Army till the time of George II.

## HIS PUPIL'S SISTER.

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(Continued from page 9.)

"Now papa," said the girl briskly, "I hope we are not going to have any more of those horrid scenes. I know you are going to bother me about Mr. St. John. Cannot the man take no for an answer? I have told you and him a score of times that I will not be his wife. I do not love him, I never did, and I will not marry him. The only man I will ever marry is Walden Digby. Are you not getting a trifle tired of this speech. How many times have I made it, I wonder!"

Her father did not, as was generally the case on these occasions, fly into a passion; he only shook his head sorrowfully.

"I had hoped," he said, speaking in a low, nerveless tone, so different from his usual jerky manner that the girl looked up startled, "to have spared you the pain of hearing what I must now say. However, your repeated refusal of George St. John's offers, leaves me with no alternative. Alice, my dear child, unless you wish to see your father and mother turned out of their homes—beggars on the highway—you must marry St. John. Hitherto he has come as a suppliant, now, wielding the power he has held so long, he dictates terms. I cannot enter into details, you would not understand them. One thing, however, I can make plain. In order to carry out my mining operations, in recent years I have been compelled to borrow large sums of money. In order to obtain this, I have pledged my estate and everything I possess. A few years ago these securities passed into St. John's hands, and unless you consent to marry him, he will most assuredly strip us of everything we have. Do you understand?"

"Not quite. You see this places the matter on an altogether different basis. I had no idea that the man was offering to buy me. Are you sure that we are securing the most favourable terms?"

She spoke bitterly, and with a ringing scorn in her words, but her father only said simply,—

"I have told you all, now, my dear; the rest remains with you."

"And what time have I in which to consider this bargain?"

"St. John will expect a definite reply to-morrow morning."

She kissed her father gently and went straight to her room, from which she did not stir until the evening.

It was the old familiar question which she had often seen discussed in novels, little dreaming that one day it would come home to her in hard, stern reality. Love or duty, for which should she decide? Some of the heroines, she remembered chose one part—some, the other. In which camp would she be found?

Should she sacrifice her love and her life for her family's sake? What would Walden say? If only she could see him and talk to him! but that was impossible; she must fight this terrible battle alone.

"Oh, my darling!" she moaned, "my generous true-hearted lover, what will you think of me? 'Tried in the balance and found wanting,'—that will be your verdict. Oh I cannot, I dare not do this thing."

Then she thought of her father, who except on this one matter had always been very good to her, and her patient, tender-hearted mother, and her heart was racked afresh with anguish. Turn which way she would, there was nothing but a blank wall of misery and wretchedness.

She did not go to luncheon, but when the dinner-bell rang she bathed her tell-tale eyes and aching brows, and descended, for the St. Johns, she knew had gone to a neighbouring estate, and Howard was staying for a few days with a friend at Truro.

Mr. Tremayne made no allusion to the subject uppermost in his mind, neither did Alice, but she looked so miserable that directly the meal was at an end he escaped to his own room.

Alice and her mother had scarcely seated themselves in the drawing-room, when a servant



announced that a strange gentleman, who would not give his name, wished to see Mrs. Tremayne.

The ladies glanced at each other wonderingly, and then the elder said,—

"Show the gentleman in, I will see him here."

"Who can it be?" whispered Alice, softly, when the door opened and the black sheep of the Tremayne family entered.

Mrs. Tremayne regarded him for a few moments intently, then with a sudden cry she exclaimed—

"Why, it is James. Thank Heaven, my poor boy that you are still alive, I thought you had been dead long since," and she kissed his cheek affectionately.

Even had there been no Walden Digby to benefit, I fancy the millionaire's scheme of revenge would have fared badly at that moment.

"And this is my little cousin," he said presently, "you do not know me, pretty coz, but henceforward I am your cousin Jim, and your most devoted slave, in proof of which I bring you good news of Mr. Digby."

"Do you know Walden?" she asked eagerly, "are you his friend?"

"I am more," he answered laughingly, "I am his ambassador, come to treat for the hand of a fairy princess."

Alice gazed at him piteously and burst into tears; the strain was too great.

James looked at his aunt in consternation. What had he said or done to cause this outburst?

"Forgive me," said Alice, presently, "it is very foolish I know, but I cannot help myself."

Then little by little, by means of skilfully contrived questions, he wormed out her story, and as she proceeded, his face lit up with more and more interest.

"And so you see," she concluded, with a sob, "I am perfectly helpless."

"Not exactly," responded her companion with a curious smile, "remember that cousin James is on your side. Cheer up, my pretty coz, we will smite the enemy hip and thigh to-morrow, and when the New Year comes, you shall invite me to your wedding."

She looked up gratefully. "I do not see how you can help us," she said, "but, somehow, your words give me comfort, and I will trust you."

"And I will not fail you," he said, earnestly, "but what is that noise? I thought I heard the opening of the hall door."

"It is Mr. St. John and his sister, they have been out to dinner, and have apparently returned early. They are going straight to their rooms. No, Rosalie is, but her brother is coming in."

George St. John opened the door and walked in. "You will excuse my sister, Mrs. Tremayne, but she is unwell, and has gone to her room. Oh! no, nothing serious at all. A slight attack of headache; the heat of the room was very oppressive, but," catching sight of the stranger, "I beg your pardon."

"Allow me," said the elder lady, "to introduce my cousin, Mr. St. John, Mr. James Tremayne."

The two men bowed courteously, but St. John's face went a deathly white, and he made a movement to leave the room.

The other, however, was too quick for him. "How very fortunate," he said with a smile, "my aunt and cousin were bemoaning the fact of your absence as they wished to retire, and did not care to leave me alone. Now, my dear aunt, I am sure you are over fatigued, and Alice looks pale. Good-night, I will see my uncle in the morning, one of the servants can remain to show me my room. Howard's will do very well. Mr. St. John will join me with a cigar in the smoke room," and he bowed the astonished ladies out with an easy self-possession. Then he turned to his companion,—

"So you are Mr. St. John, are you?" he said; "that, no doubt, is your proper name, but I should find it more convenient to call you George Hudson. I see you remember me in spite of my altered appearance. Yes, I am James Tremayne, the 'Jimmy' of the old days, but clothed and in his right mind. Now, Mr. St. John Hudson, let me give you a piece of valuable advice. There is a train timed to leave Truro at 7-15 in the morning for London. It is rather early for a gentleman of your habits I am aware, but for once you can practise the art of early rising, and do not

oversleep yourself. Now, no bluster, because it is useless. Were it not that I believe you actually do love the little girl in your own selfish way, I would put you outside the house at once; as it is, I do not care to see you here at breakfast time. The game is up, my friend, and it is 'Jimmy' Tremayne who has checked you. Don't disturb your sister, scribble an excuse to be given her in the morning—that will not cost you much trouble. And now, good-night, my friend, I think I will defer the pleasure of that cigar, after all."

#### CHAPTER IX.

THE breakfast-room at Culme Castle on the morning following James Tremayne's arrival wore a rather deserted appearance.

Mr. Tremayne, of course, did not come down. Howard was absent. Rosalie St. John, with the coming of the day had fallen into a refreshing slumber, and her brother had disappeared.

"A most remarkable thing," exclaimed Mrs. Tremayne to her nephew and Alice, "I cannot understand it at all. Roberts says he came down quite early this morning carrying a small bag. He asked her to make him a cup of tea, gave her a note for Rosalie and left a message for me, to the effect that he was compelled to hurry away to London. He intended to inform me last evening, but I suppose Rosalie's headache and your unexpected visit put it out of his head."

"Yes, that is very probable," returned her nephew with a merry twinkle.

"Mamma!" ventured Alice, "I believe cousin James knows more about Mr. St. John's sudden departure than either you or I. Remember last night, when he actually sent us to bed as though we had been children."

James laughed heartily at the recollection and was joined by the other two.

"Yes," he admitted, "it certainly was rather a strong proceeding, but I wanted a few minutes' private conversation with St. John, and I was afraid that I might not get it."

"Ah," cried Alice, "it is as I said; you do know the secret of his remarkable disappearance."

"Did I not say," laughed James, "that we would smite the enemy, hip and thigh? Well, the engagement took place last night, and now, the foe is in full retreat."

"St. John in retreat! what do you mean?" exclaimed the girl, excitedly.

"That he has abandoned the contest, and you have lost your last chance of becoming Mrs. St. John. And now for a finishing stroke, I must see your father. That is the art of war in a nutshell. Always attack your enemy in detachments, and when you have annihilated one division, turn your attention at once to the next. That is what I am about to do. St. John is routed—horse, foot and artillery; there only remains uncle Richard. No! do not thank me now, I am reserving that pleasure. Aunt! does uncle Richard know I am here, and that I wish to see him?"

"Yes, my boy, I informed him of the fact last night."

"And how did he take it?"

"Oh! in his usual way. He groaned and said life was full of worry; but he will see you nevertheless in the study. I am afraid though it is rather too early yet."

"Never mind, I will stroll round the stables and smoke a cigar, I did not get one last night you know, after all. Now little woman," to Alice, "put some roses in your cheeks, we shall be having Walden down to-morrow."

Alice blushed a rosy red, and her eyes sparkled with joy—surely this mysterious cousin of hers must be some wonderful magician.

Pending the time when his uncle would be ready to receive him, James sauntered out to the stables, where he smoked his after-breakfast cigar, with a delightful consciousness of his coming victory.

"Mr. Tremayne's compliments, sir, and he will see you in the study whenever you are at liberty."

"Very good," answered James, carelessly, throwing away the end of his cigar, "I will go to him at once."

Richard Tremayne sat in his high-backed chair bolt upright, his brow clouded, and with a look of pain and suffering on his face.

He had not yet seen Alice, and did not know what his decision might be; but in any case it must involve misery and suffering. And now there was another thorn implanted in his flesh.

This graceless ne'er-do-well nephew, whom he had not seen for years, who in fact he believed to have been dead long since, had actually re-appeared.

What could be his object? Money of course, and the nominal owner of Culme Castle smiled grimly at the idea.

He glanced nervously across the room as the door opened. Was this his nephew—this big-bearded man, who displayed every evidence of apparent well-being and prosperity?

"Yes," said the younger man pleasantly in answer to the implied question, "it is indeed your scapegrace nephew. Do you remember the last time I stood in this house when you drove me forth with scorn and contumely? I have never forgotten it. Through all the long years I treasured up your words in bitterness of spirit, and I swore to myself that the day should come when you should regret them. I was going to the dogs rapidly in those days, or rather, perhaps, had gone, and you refused to stretch forth a hand to save me. However, the help which I could not obtain from my own flesh and blood was afforded by a stranger, and in the States I made a fresh start. I worked hard and saved money. As time passed I accumulated a large capital, and every year my wealth increased by leaps and bounds. All this time I kept up my communication with the old country, and never lost sight of you. Within the last few years I learned to my joy that you were getting into difficulties and compelled to mortgage your estate. This was my opportunity. I resolved that the Culme Castle, from which I had been ignominiously driven, should be mine. To obtain this result I spared no expense. I have acquired an enormous fortune. I was prepared to spend every penny in the accomplishment of my desire. For a long time I was unsuccessful, and it was only quite recently that my lawyers were enabled to get hold of your papers. What they cost me I did not inquire—I was perfectly satisfied."

His uncle interrupted him.

"You are dreaming," he said, quietly, "or worse. Mr. St. John holds my mortgage deeds."

"And used them to coerce Alice into a marriage with him."

"That is so; in fact I am expecting her now at any moment with her decision."

"I can tell you at once. She absolutely refuses to marry this St. John."

"In that case we are all ruined. I will not trouble you to proceed with the story of your imaginary revenge. At one time, doubtless, it would have proved interesting; now the best thing you can do with it is to work it up into a novel, where you can bring it to a more satisfactory conclusion."

Now that the blow had actually fallen, and he was irretrievably ruined, Richard Tremayne could show a bold front to the world, however he might grieve in secret, and his nephew admired him all the more for his stout-heartedness.

Still it was necessary to disabuse his mind of this erroneous impression, and, accordingly, James said,—

"You are labouring under a misapprehension. This St. John has not an atom of power over you. True, he did once own the deeds, but they are no longer in his possession; they are here," and he drew a bundle of papers from his pocket.

Richard Tremayne did not betray any surprise at the sight of these documents; he did not even express any feeling of anger at having been hoodwinked by St. John. He simply said,—

"As the result will be the same, you cannot expect me to feel any great amount of interest in the way it is brought about. Whether you or St. John be the agent is quite immaterial to me."

"But suppose there is a way out of the difficulty? What if I can show you how to preserve your estate without a particle of suffering to anyone?"

"Perhaps you will condescend to be a little

more explicit; I am tired of guessing at conundrums."

James laughed good-naturedly.

"You heard me speak just now," he said, "of a friend who saved me from utter destruction. That friend, unfortunately, is dead, but his son lives, and his name is Walden Digby. Now do you begin to comprehend? At present young Digby is in a very good position; in a year or two, he will be the editor of a large and influential London paper, for I happen to know that his chief is only staying on to oblige the proprietor, in order that the young man may gain a little experience. This Digby and Alice, I understand, only wait your consent to be married! Will you give it? Your promise to St. John is a dead letter. By his unscrupulous conduct, he has forfeited all claim to your consideration."

"That is so, but I fail to see how my consent to this new arrangement will prevent my ruin."

"No! I will explain. Pass me your word that Walden Digby shall marry Alice, and we will put these formidable-looking documents into the fire. That shall be my revenge."

The elder man passed his hand across his brow. "That is but a poor revenge, James," he said, "but have it your own way. Alice shall marry Digby to-morrow, if she will."

"Hurrah!" shouted James, "here you go, old parchment-backs," and he pitched the mortgage deeds into the fire. "Now for my bonny cousin," and he ran whistling down the stairs.

"Alice! come along, we are going to drive into Truro. How will this do? Digby, *Daily Link*, Fleet-street. Come at once. Wedding imminent. Alice."

The girl looked up into his face with a happy smile.

"Not all that, cousin James," she said, shyly. "Come at once, will suffice. But is it really true? It all seems so strange, I can scarcely believe I am awake. You are, most certainly, a wonderful magician."

They drove to the telegraph office where James wired both to Mr. Styles and Walden, and then they called round for Howard who was returning home that evening.

They formed a happy party that night. Mr. Tremayne was brighter and more cheerful than he had been for some time past; cousin James was in the highest spirits; and, Alice! ah, one glance at the beautiful face and love-lit eyes showed the magnitude of her joy.

Between uncle and nephew all was forgotten and forgiven. The old bad feeling which James had nourished in his heart was swept utterly away never to return, while his senior had learned the lesson that, apparently, in the most sterile ground, there may exist a vein of fertile soil.

Acting apparently under her brother's instructions, Rosalie St. John, with many expressions of regret, had taken her departure early in the afternoon, though to this day she is ignorant of the real reason which compelled their hurried flight from Culme Castle.

The next evening Walden arrived, his face radiant with his soul's happiness. He did not know, exactly, what had occurred, he did not pause to inquire; it was sufficient for him that the long night of sorrow had melted into the joy of the morning light.

"At last, my darling," he cried, as he clasped the blushing maiden to his breast, "mine now for ever, until one of us goes down into the dark valley of death."

After dinner they held a family council.

Cousin James, who appeared to be the presiding genius, advocated an immediate marriage, but Alice pleaded for a little delay, and finally, it was decided that they should be married on the first day of the New Year, just a week after the date fixed for Isabel's wedding.

And thus it happened, that, after an interval of many years, Probyn Digby's kindness met with its reward and paved the way for his son's future happiness.

[THE END.]

ENGLISH-SPEAKING people have the best foreheads and eyebrows.

## FACETIÆ.

MAGISTRATE: "Prisoner, why did you throw that plate at your wife's head?" Accused: "Nothing else was at hand, your worship!"

FIRST: "There is one sign that should be placed over every letter-box in the city." Second: "What is that?" First: "Post no bills."

"A PROVINCIAL newspaper prints the following advertisement: 'Wanted, a woman to wash, iron, and milk two or three cows.'"

It is when a lady enters a crowded tram-car that the man who has a seat really feels that he is getting his money's worth out of a newspaper.

THE NURSE: "I'm glad to announce, professor, your wife and the little boy are—"  
Absent-minded Professor: "Eh, little boy? Ask him what he wants."

"Now that you are living in the country I suppose you have fresh milk every day." "We didn't this morning." "Why not?" "The train from town was two hours late."

"I'll take a little of everything," said Taddles to the waiter, after glancing over the bill of fare at the restaurant. "Yes, sir," replied the waiter, who straightway brought a plate of hash.

FAIR GRADUATE: Which is the proper expression, "girls are," or "girls is?" Chorus of Schoolgirls: "Girls are," of course! "Of course; pah! Girls are my hat on straight!"

FROM the report of a missionary to Africa: "My congregation refuse to give up cannibalism, but I have succeeded in so far improving their tastes that they now eat with knives and forks."

EDITOR: "What do you mean by this expression you use, 'a shapeless mass'?" Reporter: "Why—er—um—anything that—I mean, something that—a—er—why, you know." Editor: "Thanks! I only asked for information."

FIRST BOY: "Your father must be an awful mean man. Him a shoemaker, and makin' you wear them old boots!" Second Boy: "He's nothin' to what your father is. Him a dentist, and your baby only got one tooth!"

"HASN'T she wonderful dreamy eyes?" said Cholly. "Ya-as," replied Willie Wibbles, "she has, indeed. Lawst evening when I called on her she could hardly keep from goin' to sleep wight in my pweence."

MINKS: "There is one great objection to onions." WINKS: "What's that?" MINKS: "They are wholesome." WINKS: "Do you consider that an objection?" MINKS: "Certainly. People who are fond of them don't die half so soon as you'd like them to."

AUNT MARIA: "I think you and Mr. Mann ought to get along nicely together. You know you both like the same people." MATILDA: "Yes, and what is better, we hate the same people. Just think what nice long talks we shall have together."

"PA, is generals brave men?" asked Johnny of his father. "Yes, my son, as a rule," was the reply. "Then why does artists always make pictures of 'em standing on a hill three miles away, lookin' at the battle through an opera glass?"

STRAWBER: "I had quite a compliment paid me last night. Miss Singleton said when she first looked at me she thought I was only nineteen, but when I talked I seemed like an old man." Singlerly: "You must have told her some of those ancient jokes of yours."

NELLIE: "Here is the loveliest house coat that I bought for Tom, and he doesn't seem to care for it the least bit." Minnie: "I can tell you how to make him value it above everything." Nellie: "Oh, how?" Minnie: "Tell him that you've given it away to some poor man at the door."

SMALL BOY (to old lady visitor): "I shall be sorry when you leave us." Old Lady: "Shall you indeed, Freddy?" "Yes; I shall cry, I shall!" "Dear boy, I had no idea you cared so much for me." "Yes—when you are not here we have no desert—always end with pudding!" "Oh!"

"CHOLLY pursued a number of studies at college, didn't he?" "Yes; but I don't think he ever caught up with any."

EDITOR: "Doctor Endee has sued us for libel." Assistant: "What for?" Editor: "I wrote 'The doctor took the patient's pulse before he prescribed for him,' and the intelligent compositor set it up 'pulse.'"

"DAWKINS has bought a bicycle." "Didn't know he rode." "He doesn't ride. But the machine was offered him at such an astonishingly low figure that he couldn't resist the temptation." "Who sold it to him?" "Cutts, the surgeon." "Oh!"

MRS. DE STYLE: "Don't wear that dress. A soiled or faded silk is the acme of vulgarity." Daughter: "Then what shall I wear?" Mrs. De Style: "Wear your new dress with that old yellow lace which we found in your grandmother's ash-heap."

MRS. DE FASHION: "My dear, I have picked out a husband for you." Miss De Fashion: "Very well; but I want to say right now, mother, that when it comes to buying the wedding dress, I am going to select the materials myself, so there."

MOTHER: "I don't know what to do about my little boy. I have been feeding him on all the new patent health foods I could hear of, and he gets thinner and thinner every day." Doctor: "H'm! Desperate cases require desperate remedies. Try him on meat and potatoes."

FIRST PASSENGER: "Beg pardon, but what are you reading that you find so interesting?" Second Passenger: "It's an article showing the terrible effects which are likely to follow reading in a moving railway car. It is very interesting, and so convincing, too." (Proceeds with his reading.)

A LADY of great beauty and attractiveness, who was an ardent admirer of Ireland, once crowned her praise of it at a party by saying, "I think I was meant for an Irishwoman." "Madam," rejoined a witty son of Erin, who happened to be present, "thousands would back me in saying you were meant for an Irishman."

MRS. YOUNGBRIDE: "How does your breakfast suit you this morning, darling?" Mr. Youngbride: "Just right. I tell you, Clara, it may be plebeian, but I'm awfully fond of calf's liver." "So am I. Don't you think, George, it would be nice and economical to keep a calf; then we can have calf's liver for breakfast every morning."

A FACETIOUS man had built himself a new house, with a stone verandah and steps up to it in front, and took a friend to look at it. "Very nice—very nice indeed," said the friend, critically; "but it has such a set look. Lacks expression, you know." "Of course," replied the owner; "but what else could you expect from a house with such a stony stair?"

CONLAN: "Where did yez get that broken nose and yer eye blacked?" DOLAN: "It was from meeting O'Flannigan wid me gyruul." CONLAN: "Did yez lick him?" DOLAN: "Well, that was a matter of puzzlement to me from thin till now. Yez see, when I kin to me sinces, O'Flannigan was gone, an' to this minnit I don't know which wan ov us got licked."

A COUNTRY schoolmaster thus delivered himself: "If a carpenter wants to cover a roof fifteen feet wide by thirty broad with boards five feet broad by twelve long, how many boards will he need?" The new boy took up his hat and made for the door. "Where are you going?" asked the master. "To find a carpenter," replied the boy. "He ought to know that better than any of us fellers."

SHE was a very fidgety old lady, and was interrogating the conductor of the lift at Folkestone. "Are you quite sure it's safe?" she asked. "Oh, yer, mum," said the man. "Has there ever been an accident?" "No, mum." "Well, but suppose there should be an accident, then where should I be?" "Well, mum," responded the man, rather grimly, "I suppose that depends pretty much on the sort of life you've led!" Collapse of old lady.



## SOCIETY.

THE Duke and Duchess of York are at York Cottage, Sandringham, for a residence of several months.

THE Princess of Wales and her daughters are to be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Fife for about three weeks.

THE largest and most famous ruby in the world forms part of the Imperial State Crown made for Queen Victoria in 1838. It is believed that this ruby was worn in front of the helmet of Henry V. at Agincourt.

AMONG the Pope's treasures is an egg which he received from an English lady one Easter. The shell is made of ivory, its lining is of white satin, and the yolk is a golden case containing a large ruby set in diamonds; the whole is worth upwards of £2,000.

PRINCE ALEXANDER of Teck will shortly be gazetted to a regiment, although in what corps he is to serve has not yet been decided. He is a very good-looking lad and very like the Duchess of Teck, and is tall and well-made.

It is at present believed that the Prince and Princess of Wales will spend the Christmas holiday season at Sandringham with a considerable house party, or relays of house parties, and that their Royal Highnesses will entertain rather largely in the New Year.

THERE are a large number of sovereigns now living who have never taken the trouble to be crowned. Among them are the Emperor of Germany, the King of Italy, the present youthful King of Spain, the Queen of Holland, the King of Bavaria, and the King of Saxony.

THE Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha are going to Bucharest on a visit to Prince and Princess Ferdinand of Roumania at the Castle of Tisna. Princess Alexandra of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha is already there on a visit to her sister Princess Ferdinand of Roumania.

THE Duke and Duchess of Cumberland will probably pay their long-expected and long-promised visit to England in May next, in which case they are to be the guests of the Queen at Windsor Castle, and of the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House.

A SOMEWHAT near prospect of an alliance between our own Royal family and the House of Orleans existed some few years ago. Most people heard a more or less vague rumour, at the time, of a possible engagement between the late Duke of Clarence and Princess Hélène d'Orleans; but it was generally discredited on account of the obvious religious obstacle to such a union.

THE marriage of the Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont (the brother of the Queen Regent of the Netherlands and the Duchess of Albany) and Princess Bathildis of Schaumburg-Lippe will be postponed for some time in consequence of the delicate health of the bride-elect, who is staying at Friedrichshafen, on a visit to her sister, the Queen of Württemberg. Prince Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe, who is engaged to be married to Princess Louise of Denmark, is the eldest brother of Princess Bathildis.

THE marriage of Prince Adolphus of Teck and Lady Margaret Grosvenor is now fixed to take place in the private chapel at Eaton Hall, on the afternoon of Thursday, November 29th, and the honeymoon will be spent at Trentham Hall, the Duke of Sutherland's place in Staffordshire. The Duke and Duchess of York, Princess Louise, the Duke of Cambridge, and the Duke and Duchess of Teck and their sons, the Princes Francis and Alexander, will be the members of the Royal Family present at the wedding, and they are to be included in the house party at Eaton Hall. The party will be limited to relations, and will include the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, Lord and Lady Ormonde, Lord Lorne, Lord and Lady Chesham, Lord and Lady Leicester, Lord and Lady Ebury, Lord and Lady Lytton, Mr. Henry Chaplin, Lord and Lady Stalbridge, Lord and Lady Leigh, Lord and Lady Maclesfield, the Dowager Lady Wenlock, and Sir Michael and Lady Octavia Shaw-Stewart.

## STATISTICS.

THE product of a single oyster in one season is 1,000,000 young oysters.

ABOUT fourteen millions, it is estimated, are annually spent on tobacco and pipes in the United Kingdom.

IF we moved our legs proportionately as fast as an ant, it is calculated we could travel nearly 800 miles an hour.

THE exports of butter to tropical countries have decreased nearly forty per cent. since 1890, owing to the competition of oleo.

## GEMS.

OUR highest joy comes when others rejoice with us.

ONE ungrateful man does an injury to all who stand in need of aid.

PAIN is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts, not to hurt others.

Do not talk about the lantern that holds the lamp; but make haste, uncover the light, and let it shine.

To live for others is greater than to live for self; a benefactor is greater than a despot; integrity is better than gold or genius.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OYSTER CRISPS.—Take twelve large oysters, wipe dry, roll them in rolled cracker-crumbs. Have twelve slices of bacon cut as thin as possible; lay each oyster on a slice of bacon crosswise. Fold the bacon over them and pin with a wooden toothpick. Put them in a frying-pan with a little lard and fry until crisp. Serve hot.

POTATO SALAD.—The ingredients for a potato salad of usual size, are four potatoes (boiled), a minced onion and two boiled beets. The garnishing is the whites of three hard-boiled eggs, and lettuce, and the dressing is composed of the yolks of the three eggs mashed and mixed with three-fourths of a cup of vinegar, one teaspoonful each of melted butter and mustard, and two teaspoonfuls each of salt and sugar.

APPLE SNOW.—Peel and grate one large sour apple, sprinkle over it a small cup of powdered sugar as you grate it, to keep it from turning dark. Break into this the whites of two eggs, and beat it all constantly for half an hour. Take care to have it in a large bowl, as it beats up very stiff and light. Heap this in a glass dish and pour a fine, smooth custard around it, or else whipped cream.

WATER ROLLS.—To two cups warm water add one tablespoonful butter; when it is melted, add one teaspoonful salt and one-fourth cup yeast. Stir in three cups flour and beat until light and smooth, then add another cup and mix well. Let stand over night. In the morning, knead lightly into rolls; let them rise for half an hour, and bake for twenty-five minutes in a moderate oven. When done, brush over the top with melted butter, and brown for five minutes.

GRANDMOTHER'S APPLE PIE.—Line a deep pie plate with plain paste. Pare sour apples—green ones are best—quarter, and cut in thin slices. Allow a cup of sugar and quarter of a grated nutmeg mixed with it. Fill the pie plate heaping full with the sliced apple, sprinkling the sugar between the layers. It will require not less than six good sized apples. Wet the edges of the pie with cold water; lay on the cover, and press down securely, that no juice may escape. Bake three quarters of an hour, or a little less if the apples are very tender. No pie in which the apples are stewed beforehand can compare with this in flavour. If they are used, stew till tender and strain. Sweeten and flavour to taste. Fill the pie and bake half an hour.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

SCIENTISTS predict that in a century there will be no disease not curable.

THE Tartars take a man by the ear to invite him to eat and drink with them.

THE frigate bird can fly an entire week without stopping to rest.

WASPS rank next to the higher classes of ants in point of insect intelligence.

It is a remarkable fact that the deepest parts of the sea are in all cases very near the land.

THE coldest place in the world is Yakutsk, Russia. Sometimes the mercury drops to 73 degrees below zero.

THE oldest national flag in the world is that of Denmark, which has been in use since the year 1219.

A HEN attains her best laying capacity in her third year. She will lay in an average lifetime from 300 to 500 eggs.

EVERY workman in Japan wears on his cap and on his back an inscription giving his business and his employer's name.

ALTHOUGH the Suez Canal is only eighty-eight miles long, it reduces the distance from England to India, by sea, nearly 4,000 miles.

ALL plants have periods of activity and rest. Some are active in the daytime and sleep at night; others repose during the daylight hours and are awake at night.

PROBABLY the largest species of spider known to entomologists makes its home in the most mountainous regions of Ceylon. It spins a huge net of yellow silk sometimes ten feet wide.

MARRIAGES can only be celebrated in Serbia between sunrise and noon, the bride and bridegroom must be completely fasting, and only one couple may be married at the same time.

WHEN suddenly frightened, lizards will often drop their tails and scurry away. The discarded member bouncing up and down, attracts the attention of the enemy, and enables an escape to be effected.

THE mad King of Bavaria had, perhaps, the most luxurious bed in Europe. The bedstead was of gilded wood, with ornaments of solid gold, and the counterpane was of embroidered velvet, with a heavy fringe of silk and gold.

A FEW years ago no man dared ride through the streets of any Chilian city on Good Friday. Even the cars were not allowed to run. No sound of human labour was permitted to disturb the religious silence.

It is an interesting fact that we owe the singular beauty of the fancy pigeons bred in this country to the massacre of St. Bartholomew. When the Huguenots came to England for refuge, they brought with them these beautiful birds. The French silk-weavers cultivated them not simply as companions, but as models because of the hues, outlines, and patterns of their plumage, which they reproduced in their artistic productions.

A NOVEL and ingenious use that was made some time ago of a rapid river current in India, aptly illustrates the fertility of resource of the average engineering contractor. At a certain point along the river a temporary bridge was urgently necessary for the transport of materials to be used in the building of an important neighbouring structure, but the only available material was a quantity of three-inch planking, about ten feet long and a little over three feet wide, and some ordinary round timber cut from a neighbouring forest. pontoons were made of two single planks, placed about fifteen feet apart, each plank being held on edge at an angle of about fifty degrees from the vertical, both inclining up stream, and kept at their proper distance by framing made from the round timber already mentioned. Both pontoons were moored to a chain. The peculiarity of the bridge, of course, was that the water pressure upon the inclined surfaces of the planks due to a swift current, permitted them to carry a considerable load, and the structure served its purpose admirably, accommodating a pretty lively traffic for an unexpectedly long period.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. Y.—Val-hye-ri.

A. K.—Unable to enlighten you.

JEFFERY.—We never give addresses.

B. G. S.—We never heard of the process named.

OLD READER.—17th August, 1847, was a Tuesday.

POZZLE.—Sylbi or Sibyl means "a fortune teller."

ONE IN DOUBT.—You must continue to pay the charge.

CONSTANT READER.—Ind is a poetical contraction of India.

EPICURE.—Almost any fresh fruit is good with sugar and claret.

E. J.—Cheap jewellery is made in Sheffield and Birmingham.

TROUBLED READER.—Yes; you had better get everything done by a lawyer.

L. G.—You can only act safely under the advice of a solicitor.

INDIGNANT LANDLORD.—You cannot legally sell your lodger's goods for debt.

MILES.—There is not a publisher in London of the name you give.

CIVILIAN.—The grant which goes along with the Victoria Cross is £10.

NETTA.—Easter Sunday will fall in 1895 on April 14th, and in 1896 on April 5th.

WORRIED FATHER.—It is impossible for us to give an answer that would be either safe or serviceable.

ONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW.—Tin sheets are flattened by being passed between heavy rollers.

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPER.—You are not liable for the goods which were delivered unsalable.

BLUE-BELL.—The names quoted are without special significance to our knowledge.

STANLEY.—The authorities at the Royal Mint allow the full value for worn silver coins.

FOUR YEARS' READER.—In the absence of a will, the wife's unsettled property goes to her husband.

COUNTRY LAD.—The Lord Mayor's Show was first established in 1463—the feast in 1501.

V. M.—The primary colours are red, green, and violet or blue; some say vermillion red.

TIMBUCTOO.—The line, "For every guy he had a wherefore," will be found in Butler's "Hudibras."

SOCIETY.—It is not permissible to send a visiting card through the post as an indication of a visit.

WIGGIA.—Cannot be prevented if it proceeds from constitutional causes. Consult a hairdresser.

TIM.—The general rule is that no new trial is granted in cases of felony after acquittal.

P. B.—You will find works on the preparation of essences and perfumed spirits in most bookstores.

COOKIE.—Less than four hours would be useless, it often requires steady boiling for eight or nine hours.

STRANGER.—Its nationality is determined by that of its parents.

NANCE.—Such a marriage is not legal, and in many ways not at all desirable we should say. We make no charge for answering questions.

BOOKWORM.—Write to the editor of the paper; copies are not obtainable in this country, but editor may give details desired.

MILLCENT.—Kendworth is a market town. Generally speaking, a town is a place where a market is periodically held.

DOUBTFUL.—Write for official information obtainable at Government Emigrants' Information Office, 21, Broadway, London, S.W.

A. B. C.—The British Consul is not bound to send British emigrants home from Brazil; he sometimes does so as an act of charity.

T. F.—Chocolate lemonade is merely plain lemonade with a heaping teaspoonful of grated chocolate added to each glass.

MURPHY.—We have heard of vasoline used with good effect as you describe, but it is injurious to some constitutions.

OPHELIA.—Shakespeare was born in the year 1564. He died in 1616. The cause of his death is a matter of some controversy.

FRECKLES.—A homely cure is to wash the face with buttermilk before going to bed at night, and to let it dry and to wash off in morning.

FIONA.—The eldest son (or either son will do) may apply for letters of administration at the District Probate Office, Old Square.

T. B.—Our advice is to take the garment to the cleaners; they may do something for it, but in inexperienced hands it is more likely to be further injured than improved.

T. T. D.—The father being dead the junior at the end of the son's name is unnecessary; but rather the son nor his wife has any right to open the letters addressed to the wife of the deceased.

TARA.—There are at present two or three players who probably rank as high as he did in the production of artistic music on the violin.

CANNY SCOT.—Kirkcaldy was called the "lang toon" because originally it lay along the shore for close upon two miles in the form of one unbroken street.

CONTOURNEY.—A man cannot be prosecuted or imprisoned for simple trespass; there must be malicious damage done to justify a prosecution.

DOX.—The lines

"A grandam's name is little less in love Than in the dotting title of a mother," occur in Richard III., act IV., scene 4.

VENI, VIDI, VICI.—A Scotch advocate is equivalent to an English barrister; a barrister who is also Q.C. can appear in the House of Lords; some Scotch advocates are Q.C.s.

ALISON.—Bread crumbs or bread crumbs and finely powdered chalk. Rub carefully lengthwise and not across the fabric. If greasy you must use a weak solution of benzine or borax.

BETTY.—Food should never be allowed to cool in copper cooking utensils. When fruit is removed hot from the vessels, the acids from the fruit do not combine with the copper to make a poisonous compound.

TEDDY.—Recruits for Life Guards are always taken under special conditions as to measurement, which are announced in bills shown at Post Office when there are vacancies.

KITTY B.—If boiled slowly with sufficient sugar, there should be no complaint of want of "firmness." The quantity used varies, but if employed, nothing but the very best quality should be purchased.

ORLOFF.—Rub the spot carefully with a little weak ammonia water. Then rinse by patting the place with a soft cloth wet in clean water. Then press with a dry linen cloth until entirely dry. If this has no effect, it will probably have to be redyed.

## BETTER CHERISH HIM.

THERE are husbands who are pretty,  
There are husbands who are witty,  
There are husbands who in public are as smiling as the moon;There are husbands who are healthy,  
There are husbands who are wealthy,  
But the real angelic husband, well, he's never yet been born.Some for strength of love are noted,  
Who are really so devoted  
That whenever their wives are absent they are lonesome's  
soul forlorn;And while now and then you'll find one  
Who's a fairly good and kind one  
Yet a real angelic husband, oh, he's never yet been known.So the woman who is mated  
To the man who may be rated  
As pretty fair, should cherish him forever and a day,  
For the real angelic creature,  
Perfect, quite, in every feature,  
Has never been discovered, and he won't be, so they say.

M. L. B.

VERY IGNORANT.—You certainly are very ignorant of your prayer book to ask the questions you do, and we can only advise you to read carefully all the introductory remarks to the different parts of the service which will give you fuller information than we possibly can.

PEYLLIE.—The rubber rings of fruit cans will recover their elasticity if soaked for a while in weak ammonia water. This is quite an item when canning is being done and the rubber rings are found to be stretched out of shape.

SHY YOUTH.—If the conversation of the company of which you are a member takes a turn upon subjects with which you are not familiar, you should be discreet enough to withhold any observations of your own while the discussion is in progress.

BOWK.—It would take too much space to describe the process by which a body is changed into adipose, or petrified. By reading what is said about these subjects in any cyclopaedia you can get an idea of the processes.

LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—Fruit jars will do as well for keeping rain-water as bottles, provided the covers are put on tightly and the rubbers are good. Rain-water caught in August ought to be as good as that caught in June. In either case, it is well to filter it through cotton or regular filtering paper.

LUCILLE.—Wash with very slightly damp bread crumbs. If this won't do, try a little fine chalk scraped down or fuller's earth. Keep them on the hands and rub them together. A little spirits of hartshorn rubbed on the hands cleans some gloves, or sponge them with a little turpentine, and hang in the air to take away the smell.

IGNORAMUS.—Miriam was the sister of Moses, the Hebrew lawgiver. In the Bible she is called "the prophetess," and after the passage of the Red Sea she led the triumphal procession of women and joined in their song of victory. Her name is the Hebrew form of Mary, and the Arabic traditions are said to confound her with the Virgin Mary.

M. L.—Boil linseed oil carefully by means of hot water bath for safety, and continue the boiling until on cooling a little you find the oil has become sufficiently sticky to answer the purpose. It will take hours of boiling for this.

NANCE.—Fruit may be put up without sugar, but is not thought to be as fine flavoured as when a little sugar is added. The important point is to have everything, fruit, cans, covers and rubbers, " piping hot." Then put up quickly, and screw the covers down tight.

L. B.—"Eat slowly" is invariably the advice given to persons inclined to be dyspeptic. The larger part of eaters have to exercise some care in the choice of their food to avoid the penalty incurred by either over-eating or partaking of what is known to disagree with them.

C. W.—At the breaking out of the war of 1812 the navy of Great Britain consisted of 1,000 vessels, of which between 700 and 800 were efficient cruisers. The naval force of the United States consisted of seventeen cruising vessels, of which nine were of a class less than frigates, and a number of gunboats of limited size and armament for the protection of rivers, bays and inlets.

MURIEL.—Let the wax be warmed slightly before the fire. Have the tacking spread out on the table, and rub the wax well into it, holding the lump in your hand. Some persons for the same purpose use yellow soap, but wax is best. There should only be the slightest trace of the wax, but no portion of the tick should be left without it.

ANXIOUS GRACE.—So long as you comply, to a certain extent with the usages which prevail in general polite society you need be under no apprehensions as to your success in the circles to which you aspire. A modest demeanour will always aid one in society if intellectually accompanied it, together with a graceful deportment, a dignified manner, and a pleasing address.

S. B.—It is obtained by passing a Civil Service examination in writing, spelling, arithmetic to vulgar fractions, and English composition; the entrance fee is 15s.; full particulars of date and place of next examination, with list of subjects, can be had on application to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., by writing for them; no charge.

WORKING WOMAN.—Vitreous and muriatic acids make brass and copper very bright, but they soon tarnish, and consequently require more constant cleaning. A strong lye of rock-alum and water will improve brass. A solution of oxalic acid rubbed over tarnished brass with a cotton rag, soon removes the tarnish, rendering the metal bright. Wash the acid off with water, and rub perfectly dry, polishing with powdered rotten-stones.

UNHAPPY VANDER.—It is not probable that your editor will seriously insist upon you engaging yourself to him, after you shall have explained to him that you did not think he was in earnest. He may feel keenly the disappointment to which you have subjected him; but if he be of a heroic turn of mind and possessed of proper pride, he will forego all claim upon you, imaginary or real, and seek the company of others less given to coquetry.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—The Prince Imperial accompanied the British forces to Zululand as a volunteer; he held no command, and did not acknowledge anyone's authority. He dismounted to sketch, refused to mount again when asked so to do, and warned by the officer in charge of the small detachment he accompanied, the officer waited for him as long as the safety of the men under his charge warranted; then as the Prince refused to return, he had to be left to his fate.

FLORENCE.—Cleaning fine hats is a business by itself, and it is always well to send them to a professional when possible. If this cannot be done, and they are past the brushing stage, the linings and trimmings should be removed, and the task may be undertaken at home. Place the hat in a pan or tub of warm soap suds, and move it about gently until it is thoroughly wet. Then, with a soft brush, clean the brim as well as possible. Rinse in clean suds, letting it remain for some hours in the suds. Then put in a barrel or tight box, and let it hang for a day or two over burning sulphur. The roll sulphur is best for this purpose, although the powder may be used if care is taken to renew it frequently. Treated in this way straw acquires a soft, creamy tint that no bleaching compounds of acids are able to give. After the hat is sufficiently bleached, it must be stiffened and pressed into shape.

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